University of Cambridge

Faculty of English

(Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic)

THE LEGENDS OF

ÞIÐREKS SAGA AF BERN

Andrew R. Davidson

Girton College

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Andrew R. Davidson -- The Legends of *Þiðreks saga af Bern*

This thesis seeks to establish the extent of Scandinavian influence on the (originally German) forms of the legends in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*. Those legends with good non-German analogues are selected and examined individually for evidence of Scandinavian elements in the versions contained in *Þiðreks saga*. Previous studies are surveyed and evaluated in conjunction with a fresh appraisal of each chosen section. Comparative material includes verse and prose narratives, both legendary and historical, literary allusions and pictorial representations. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the following: the accounts of Velent, Vaði, Viðga, Heimir, Valtari, Sigurð, the Niflungs, Erminrek and Þiðrek himself. Discussion of the work as a whole follows, assessing the structural affinities of the saga and the possibility that harmonisation of the component legends with each other has altered their presentation. Different aspects of interference by editors or redactors are attributed, as far as possible, to Scandinavian or German writers. The concluding chapter attempts to unify the specific arguments and weigh the permissibility of generalisation about the rest of the saga from the portions hitherto studied.

It emerges that each of the legends save those of Erminrek and Þiðrek shows signs of alteration, albeit minimal, where the insertion of aspects not found in extant German texts harmonises with the story as it appears to have been in the original. It is hypothesised that the tale of Erminrek remains unchanged because the Norse view of the character is incompatible with the German, whereas Þiðrek may previously have been almost unknown in Scandinavian heroic legend. That being the case, it is improbable that any of the remaining component parts of the saga, for which there are no good non-German analogues, have been Scandinavianised. Some changes may, however, have been made by a rationalising editor, who is more likely to have been Scandinavian than German, as the saga is constructed along characteristically Norse rather than continental lines.

The Legends of *Þiðreks saga af Bern*

Um þessa sögu hafa ókjör verið rituð, en ekki verður sagt að menn viti þeim mun meira um hana en aðrar sem meira hefur verið gert til að ráða gátur hennar.

Jón Helgason, *Tvær kviður fornar*, p. 37

Preface and Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. Nevertheless it owes much to my supervisor, Paul Bibire, and his highly individual mixture of dismay at my failings and encouragement for my good qualities. My fellow postgraduate, Stephan Grundy, gave helpful advice and mechanical assistance; nor must I forget the immense kindness of Mrs. Jean Beach in the English Faculty. David Parsons was instrumental in putting me in touch with Dr. Susanne Kramarz-Bein, to whom I am grateful for organising the Bonn symposium on *Þiðreks saga* and funding my attendance at it. Girton College has done its best to enhance my stay in Cambridge, and thanks are especially due to the former Warden of Wolfson Court, Mrs. Lorna Troake. I should also cite Professor Christopher Stephens for allowing me to have a photocopy made of his late father's thesis, and the staff of the University of London Library for providing it.

It would be churlish to limit my appreciation to those who have been personally in touch with me during the period of my research to help make it what it is. I feel a great debt towards the scholars who have written and published in this field. Rather than just let my references speak for themselves, I should like to single out the following, in purely alphabetical order: Theodore Andersson; Henrik Bertelsen; R. W. Chambers; H. R. Ellis Davidson; George T. Gillespie; Kemp Malone; Rory McTurk; F. Norman; and W. E. D. Stephens.

Pride of place, however, goes to my parents. Without their love and support the undertaking would have been quite impossible. I can never repay them for all that they have done; but more important yet is what they have been. Long may it continue.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Object

Þiðreks saga af Bern is, according to its prologue, a collection of tales current in northern Germany at the time of its writing.[1] The sagaman also shows knowledge of the Scandinavian forms of the legends, both by explicit commentary in the prologue (ib.) and during the narration (e.g. ch. 111, pp. 105-06, ch. 291, p. 347), and by occasionally altering name-forms, most noticeably in the account of the Vǫlsungs and Niflungs. This leads to the suspicion that the events of the German stories may have been altered for the benefit of a Scandinavian readership, but it is difficult to be certain quite how extensive any such alteration may have been and precisely where it may have taken place. Accordingly scholars who have made use of *Þiðreks saga* have tended to do so with rather an apologetic tone, unsure of precisely what weight may be attached to its testimony.[2] This study aims to rectify that state of affairs by examining the forms of the legends in the saga methodically in order to ascertain if there is any overall principle governing their relationship to German or Norse tradition. My emphasis is solely on establishing the status of *Þiðreks saga* as a witness to versions of its episodes in one society or the other, distinguishing Scandinavian from German elements rather than identifying different specifically German sources in one portion of narrative.

I have concentrated particularly on stories with good non-German parallels. W. E. D. Stephens, in his unpublished M.A. dissertation 'An Examination of the Sources of the Thidrikssaga' (University of London, 1937), has studied the legends with especial emphasis on German analogues, and his findings indicate a predominant faithfulness to German originals, although with Scandinavian touches in sometimes surprising places; but his thesis leaves scope for a different approach. Only four out of eleven chapters in his study coincide with my material; in itself an indication of the contrasting foci of our research. Other scholars have usually touched

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[1] *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, ed. by Henrik Bertelsen, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905-11), I, 2. Subsequent citations ignore volume number, as that is plain from the chapter numbers.

[2] See, for example, William J. Paff, *The Geographical and Ethnic Names in the Þíðriks Saga: A Study in Germanic Heroic Legend*, Harvard Germanic Studies, 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. v-vi, 3.

on *Þiðreks saga* only as an element in the textual prehistory of different literary works; instances will appear at the relevant points in my argument.

Having made a selection from the mass of stories contained in the saga, I then analyse each in turn, note the salient points of the saga's version and compare them with parallels elsewhere in Norse and German. Textual relationships must be evaluated, to make sure which way round any influence is exerted. It can be helpful to bring in other sources, such as English references, in case a link (textual or traditional) can be established between those and either the Norse or German accounts, and further details be elicited for comparison with the saga. Yet it is important not to set about devising a composite story with elements from different sources mingled indiscriminately; that would be an editorial chimera, with no authoritative standing as a basis for comparative criticism. The full range of possible diversity of tradition must be kept in mind.

1.2: Structure

Examination of individual legends is followed by a discussion of the structure of *Þiðreks saga* and its possible relationship to the German Dietrich cycle and to other Norse sagas. Further study of the structure concentrates on how the stories are related to each other and to the overall plan of the saga, with especial reference to the prologue. General practices of the sagaman (so called to leave open the question of whether he must be considered author, editor, compiler or translator) are also considered in this chapter. The structure of the saga is important both because it may throw light on where it achieved roughly its current form, and so give some indication of the likely extent of intervention in each country, and also because it may have directly affected the presentation of the component parts.

The legends to be studied in detail are those of: Velent; Vaði; Viðga; Heimir; Valtari; Sigurð; the Niflungar; Attila; Erminrik; and Þiðrek himself. The first four form a cohesive unit. Velent comes first because legends of this figure are widespread through the Germanic world and have some interesting inter-relationships, providing a good introduction to the methods adopted in the rest of the thesis, but his story is more or less self-contained in its own portion of the saga, so that I can practise my method on the story in isolation without having to worry about wider

structural considerations. The chapter on Þiðrek involves questions of structure to a considerable degree; earlier chapters have led up to that and, one hopes, indicated areas of inquiry likely to be profitable for the elucidation of the affinities of the hero's own personal story.

At this point it is worth stressing that by entitling each chapter with the name of a character or group of characters I do not mean to suggest that the investigation is limited to the presentation of each figure; it is merely convenient shorthand for the story or stories centring on the person. So, in linking the chapters on Vaði, Velent and Viðga I am not governed by the fact that these three characters are presented as father, son and grandson in the saga; rather I am acknowledging the fact that at least some versions of the legends themselves are or appear to be genetically linked, and that it is therefore most convenient to analyse them in close proximity. Similarly, placing Heimir next to Viðga is due not to any desire to avoid splitting up old friends but to the fact that their appearance together in many tales means that what is said of one may be applied to the other, and so it helps if memory and cross-reference do not have to reach back too far.

Two characters, however, are to be studied in their own right, rather than just standing for the narratives in which they feature. A section of 'The Niflungs' is devoted to Attila and his portrayal over the span of the saga. The discussion of Erminrik, like that of Attila, is mostly a character study, but this character is revealed more in action than the other. These two introduce the question of historical awareness, which also figures in the chapter on Þiðrek and looms large in the account of the saga's structure.

The selection of these legends is determined partly by their significance within the saga itself and partly by their prominence in the whole field of Germanic heroic legend. It might have been helpful to have included legends in the saga that have no extant parallels, and also to have examined German and Scandinavian treatments of legends not contained in the saga in order to try and isolate general characteristics of each tradition, but that would have been to widen the scope of the thesis too much for the word-limit and the available time.

1.3: Sources

Some selection must be made from the possible source material, as not all repositories of heroic legend will be relevant for the regional affinities of the forms contained in *Þiðreks saga*. The Swedish redaction of the saga, for instance, has value as an independent witness only when it differs from the earlier version (otherwise, of course, it is not independent). I have given preference to materials roughly contemporary with or earlier than the saga, but later texts have been useful when they have provided suggestive elucidation of the saga or its earlier analogues. I have generally avoided post-Renaissance materials as too late to be of certain validity. There is no way of being sure that tradition has been faithfully preserved since the thirteenth century, and the later the text the more likely that folk-tales have changed or that literary authors have been influenced from elsewhere.

1.4: Name-forms

I use the standard forms of the names as used in Guðni Jónsson's edition of *Þiðreks saga*, with nominative *-r* and its reflexes omitted in all Old Norse names except after short vowels. There is no universally recognised standard for the citation of Old Norse names in Modern English, but the above practice is widely accepted in translation.[3] While this is not a translation, it nonetheless seems appropriate to omit such inflexions in a language so little inflected as English. I have nonetheless retained accents and special characters, because English accepts foreign phonology more easily than foreign morphology. As other sources may use other forms of the names, such forms are often a convenient shorthand to specify the characterisation of the figure in one particular text or group of texts. When there is a standard Modern English version of the name I use that to refer to the tradition(s) in general. For example, 'Weland' means 'the Wayland-figure as portrayed in Old English,' with 'Welund' indicating the mention of the character in *Deor*. The following list is arranged alphabetically according to the forms in *Þiðreks saga*. Forms listed under 'English' are Old English unless otherwise specified.

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[3]See, for example, Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, transl. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Dent, 1987), p. xviii.

General	Þiðreks saga	Norse	German	English	Other
Attila	Attila	Atli	Etzel	Ætla	
Brunhild	Brynhild	Brynhild	Brünhilt		
Ermanaric	Erminrek	Jǫrmunrekk	Ermenrîch, Ermenrik	Eormenric	
	Faðmir	Fafnir			
	Fólkher		Volkêr		
	Gernoz		Gêrnôt		
	Gíslher		Gîselhêr		
Gudrun	Grímhild	Guðrún	Kriemhilt		
	Gunnar	Gunnar	Gunther	Guðhere	Guntharius (L.)
	Heimir		Heime	Hama	
Hildebrand	Hildibrand	Hildibrand	Hildebrant	Ildebrande (ME)	
Hildegund	Hildigunn		Hildegunt	Hildegyth	Hiltgunt (L.), Helgunda (Pol. L.)
	Hǫgni	Hǫgni	Hagen	Hagena	Hagano (L.)
Nibelungs	Niflungar	Niflungar	Nibelungen		
	Sigmund	Sigmund	Siegmund	Sigemund	
Sigurd	Sigurð	Sigurð	Siegfried, Sîvrit		Sjúrður (Faroese)
Swanhild		Svanhild			Sunilda (L.)
Wade	Vaði		Wate	Wada (OE), Wade (ME)	Gado (L.)
Walter	Valtari		Walther	Waldere	Waltharius (L.), Walterus (Pol. L.)
Wayland	Velent	Vǫlund	Wielant	Weland, Welund	
	Viðga		Witege, Wittich	Widia, Wudga	Virgar (Faroese), Viderick (Danish)
Volsungs	Vǫlsungar	Vǫlsungar			
	Þether		Diethêr		
	Þéttleif		Dietleip		
	Þéttmar		Dietmâr		
Theodoric	Þiðrek	Þjóðrek	Dietrich	Þeodric	Diderik (Danish)

1.5: Abbreviations

Titles of poems from the Elder Edda are abbreviated as in Neckel's edition, and of Old English texts as in *Anglo-Saxon England* (see Bruce Mitchell, Christopher Ball and Angus Cameron, 'Short Titles of Old English Texts', *ASE*, 4 (1975), 207-21). Additional abbreviations are *Þs* and *Vs* for *Þiðreks saga* and *Vǫlsunga saga*, *NL* for the *Nibelungenlied*, *hS* for *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*, and the following for periodicals:

AfdA	*Arkiv für deutsches Altertum*
AfnF	*Arkiv for nordisk Filologi*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
BdGSL	*Beitrage zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*
E & S	*Essays and Studies*
ES	*English Studies*
EStn	*Englische Studien*
FS	*Frühmittelalterliche Studien*
GR	*Germanic Review*
GRM	*Germanisch-Romanisches Monatsschrift*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
MÆ	*Medium Ævum*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
MS	*Mediaeval Studies*
MScand	*Mediaeval Scandinavia*
N&Q	*Notes and Queries*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
SBVS	*Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research*
Spec	*Speculum*
SS	*Scandinavian Studies*
ZfdA	*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*
ZfdP	*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*

Chapter 2: Velent

2.1: Summary

The history of Velent is told in ch. 84-139 of *Þiðreks saga* (pp. 73-138). It is further discussed below (2.5), but it will be convenient to place a brief summary of it here. The giant Vaði, son of King Vilkinus and a 'siokona' (see 3.1 and 4.3, below), has a son, Velent, whom he apprentices to the smith Mímir but then takes home again as his fellow-apprentice, Sigurð, is too rough. Velent is then sent to study with two dwarfs for a year, after which time his father comes to collect him but is killed while waiting. To save himself, Velent kills the dwarfs and then sails to Jutland in a hollowed-out tree-trunk. Arriving in the land of King Niðung, he attaches himself to the royal court. He takes part in a contest with the royal smith, but his tools have been hidden. The culprit cannot be found, so Velent makes a likeness of the man, which is recognised by the king. The missing tools having been restored, Velent wins his competition by forging the sword Mimung and replaces his rival as the king's smith. When war breaks out, the king promises his daughter to the man who brings him his talisman, the 'sigrsteinn'. Velent does so, but kills the king's steward in the process, and so he is banished and his reward witheld. Velent attempts to gain revenge by assassinating the king but is caught, hamstrung and left to resume his smithying in captivity. He manages to kill two of the king's sons secretly and to seduce the princess. His brother Egil arrives at court and is forced to justify his reputation as a great archer by shooting an apple off his own son's head. Then he furnishes Velent with feathers for a flying cloak, which Egil tries out but is prevented by his brother from using to escape. Velent himself escapes by means of it and later makes peace with Niðung's surviving son, once the old king has died, and marries the princess, who has meanwhile borne him a son who grows up to be the hero Viðga.

Now the versions of the legend to be found elsewhere are to be considered. It has been customary for scholars to synthesise the various accounts in order to produce a composite Wayland-legend or body of legends,[1] but my approach is rather to separate what is definitely known of Wayland in each text and only then to decide how closely the sources agree. It will then become evident if it is appropriate to endeavour to read one story into another.

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[1]See, for example, *Deor*, edited by Kemp Malone, 2nd edn (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1977; repr. 1983), pp. 4-7, and H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Weland the Smith,' *Folklore*, 69 (1958), 145-59.

2.2: German references

First I shall discuss the incidental references that do not relate any story of Wayland at length, the bulk of which are in the German texts.[2] These generally content themselves with fathering Witege on him and calling him a great smith. His most famous work is Witege's sword Mimming, and he also gave his son the horse Schemminc. The Low German *Heldenbuch* gives a brief account of his history: Wielant is a duke, expelled from his country by two giants and reduced to poverty; he serves two kings (Elberich and Hertwich) and begets two sons (Wittich and Wittich owe) on the daughter of the second.[3]

In some versions of *Friedrich von Schwaben* the hero adopts the name 'Wielant' when searching for his beloved Amelburg.[4] Her transformation into a dove may be related to the swan-maidens in *Vǫlundarkviða*, and the behaviour of Friedrich bears some resemblance to the 'vengeful smith' motif, so this section of the romance (1871-4171) may be seen as using the Wayland-story.[5] Questions of the artistic motive can be difficult, particularly as only one of the two scribes consistently replaces 'Friedrich' with 'Wielant' (I^b only uses 'Friedrich'), but one could suggest that the name is adopted because the hero knows that he is going to act in the manner associated with Wayland. It is appropriate to mention here Edwin Bonsack's theory that both *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Friedrich von Schwaben* are spiritual autobiographies of Wieland, the apostle to the Germans, the former translated by his missionary partner.[6] His arguments are too involved to be discussed at length here, but they prove nothing except their deviser's ingenuity. In the words of Anne Burson, 'His theory, though ingenious, has not been widely accepted.'[7]

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[2]*Alpharts Tod*; *Anhang des Heldenbuche*; *Biterolf und Dietleib*; *Ecken Ausfahrt*; *Laurin A*, *D* and *K II*; *Die Gedichte vom Rosengarten zu Worms A*, *D*; *Der Rosengarte*; *Virginal*; *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*; and *Waltharius*; listed in George T. Gillespie, *A Catalogue of Persons named in German Heroic Literature (700-1600)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), p. 141.

[3]*Das deutsche Heldenbuch*, ed. by A. von Keller, Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 87 (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1867), p. 3.

[4]I^a: Vienna, Hofbibliothek, 2984, first scribe. See *Friedrich von Schwaben*, ed. by M. H. Jellinek (Berlin, 1904), p. xviii.

[5]Edwin Bonsack lists the resemblances between *Friedrich von Schwaben* and *Vǫlundarkviða* fully, if overenthusiastically, in *Dvalinn: The Relationship of the Friedrich von Schwaben, Vǫlundarkviða and Sǫrla þáttr* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), pp. 18-19.

[6]'Wieland and Þórvarðr', *MScand*, 1 (1968), 57-81, elaborated at length in *Dvalinn*, *passim*.

[7]'Swan Maidens and Smiths', *SS*, 55 (1983), 1-19 (p. 17, n. 4).

2.3: Icelandic references

Old Norse poets use 'Vǫlund' as a *heiti* for 'smith, craftsman' in the thirteenth century, with *Hamðismál* 7 showing that it is current earlier, so clearly he is well known to their audience as the smith *par excellence*.[8] That is, unless 'vǫlund' is to be understood as a common noun meaning 'smith, craftsman', which by its form it may very well be. Having a hero with such a descriptive and easily interpretable name means that it is unclear whether the reference is to the man or to his calling. No certain information can therefore be deduced from such references.

Lilja 92 uses the expression 'vǫlundarhús' for 'labyrinth', but that is an obvious learned equation of Daedalus, the great craftsman of classical legend, with Vǫlund, the great craftsman of indigenous legend, and need not imply any closer resemblance of their stories. The poet is wishing to escape from the labyrinth, a feat achieved by Daedalus using wings, the same method as Vǫlund uses to flee Níðuð; all this is interesting and may be suggestive, but whether or not the two legends are related has no obvious bearing on the relationship between *Þiðreks saga* and the other variants.

2.4: English references

2.4.1: Minor allusions

There are fewer references to Weland in the English texts. In Middle English Laȝamon seems to preserve a corrupted tradition of him when he says of Arthur's mailcoat 'He wes ihaten Wygar, þe Witeȝe wurhte' (21131); clearly his rôle as 'aluisc smið' (21130) has been transferred to his son. Sir Frederic Madden translates 'he [the smith] was named Wygar, the witty wight,' but G. L. Kittredge corrected this by pointing out that Wygar would be an appropriate name for a piece of armour, derived from OE 'wigheard', 'battle-hard', and that Witeȝe could be from OE Widia (see 'Viðga', below). This interpretation has been generally accepted by later commentators,[9] although John McKinnell adheres to a version of the former opinion.[10]

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[8]*Merlínússpá* II, 7 and Snorri Sturluson in a kenning for Óðin.

[9]E.g. Lucy Allen Paton, introduction to *Arthurian Chronicles*, Everyman's Library (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, [n.d.]), pp. xvi-xvii; Bruce Dickins and R. M. Wilson, *Early Middle English Texts*(London: Bowes & Bowes, 1951; repr. 1961), p. 170; G. L. Brook, *Selections from Laȝamon's Brut*, rev. by John Levitt (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1983), p. 124. In their edition and translation of *Laȝamon's Arthur: The Arthurian Section of Laȝamon's Brut*, W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg translate the line as 'he who made Wygar was called Witeȝe'; an

Another byrnie ascribed to Weland's workmanship is Beowulf's (*Beowulf* 455), and King Alfred knows him, unusually, as a goldsmith.[11] More substantial are the mentions in *Waldere*. I 2-4 implies that Mimming is made by him, and II 8-9 calls him the father of Widia, Niðhad's kinsman. These indicate at least a knowledge of the figure in early mediæval England -- indeed he is remembered in the later *Torrent of Portyngale* (ll. 427-28: 'Thorrow Velond wroght yt wase, I Bettyr ys non to hold') and *Horn Child*, which mentions Mimming in the same context: 'It is þe make of miming, I Of al swerdes it is king, I & weland it wrouȝt' (ll. 400-02).[12] That would suggest a fairly consistent tradition not only of his general fame as a smith but also of his most renowned work. He is remembered in folklore as late as 1738, when the Berkshire place-name 'Wayland Smith' is first recorded in writing since 'Welandes smiððe' in the ninth century and re-enters literary tradition, after which the mentions of him in 1847, 1853 and 1929[13] may represent a literate freshening.

2.4.2: *Deor*

The allusion in *Deor* is more problematic. The poet refers to Welund's sufferings 'be wurman' (1) after Niðhad laid 'swoncre seonobende on syllan monn' (6), and the Beadohild of the next stanza is presumably the same as Bǫðvild in *Vǫlundarkviða*. Gillespie lists no German analogue; this is the only Beadohild in Searle; and Lind mentions one historical Bodwildha from the fifteenth century.[14] The death of her brothers and her own pregnancy match the story as told in the Norse poem, and efforts have been made to accommodate the first stanza also to that ac-

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interpretation which probably gets the intent right but falsifies the construction. 'He who made Witeȝe was called Wygar' would make more sense.

[10]"The Context of *Vǫlundarkviða*', *SBVS*, 23 (1990), 1-27. On p. 3 he asserts incomprehensibly that 'Arthur's mailshirt has been made by an elvish smith called Wygar, father of Widia; the son's name shows that the father was once Weland, the traditional father of Widia.' I call it incomprehensible because Laȝamon says nothing of paternity.

[11]In his translation of Boethius, edited by Walter John Sedgefield (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1899), p. 46.

[12]*Torrent of Portyngale*, ed. by E. Adam, EETS ES 51 (London: Trübner; Berlin: Asher; New York: Scribner; Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1887); *Horn Child* in *King Horn: A Middle-English Romance*, ed. by Joseph Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).

[13]See Davidson, 'Weland the Smith'.

[14]Gillespie; William George Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum: A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the time of Beda to that of King John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897); E. H. Lind, *Norsk-Isländske Dopnamn ock Fingerade Namn från Medeltiden* (Uppsala: Lundequist; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1905-15), and *Supplementband* (Oslo: Dybwad; Uppsala: Lundequist; Copenhagen: Gad, 1931).

count. Both Kemp Malone and Joyce Hill mention the former habit of connecting the 'seonobende' (6) with the hamstringing in *Vǫlundarkviða* but give no references.[15] Grein 'would read *-benne*, which is more in accordance with the story in the Edda'.[16] Malone and Hill interpret the word instead as a half-kenning for 'fetters'; a more comprehensible meaning for it, as the Old English is very difficult to interpret as having to do with the cutting of sinews, but difficulties remain in that 'swoncre' is a curious word to apply to any kind of bonds, and it is hard to find parallels for the expression 'seonobende' meaning 'fetters'. Bosworth and Toller tentatively suggest the meaning 'a bond made of sinews', but a better analogy with 'seonu-ben', 'a wound or injury of a sinew' (*Fortunes of Men* 19) and 'seonu-dolh', 'a wound of a sinew' (*Andreas* 1406) might be 'a bond on a sinew'.

The first line presents even more problems. At face value 'be wurman' looks to mean 'among snakes'; but no other extant version suggests that Wayland was thrown into a snake-pit. Neither is it taken to mean a regional name any more.[17] Malone's favoured hypothesis, tentatively supported by Hill, is that it might be a Norse-influenced half-kenning for 'swords' or 'rings'. *Lexicon Poeticum* cites 'vígs ormr', 'ormr vals' and 'ormr randar' as kennings for spear or sword, and gives 'spear' as the second meaning for the word by itself. Admittedly these usages are only datable to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but, as seen above with 'vǫlundum', earlier verses may have used them and left little or no trace. R. E. Kaske notes that *Virginâl* blazons Witege's banner with a snake as well as hammer and tongs 'als im sîn vater Wielandt gebôt' (652: 7-13), so Wayland's work may have traditionally borne the emblem of a snake.[18]

Malone's main reason for rejecting the possibility of an independent English tradition that Welund did indeed suffer among snakes is that 'Heroes die in the snake-pit; they do not escape from it'.[19] Yet *Deor* is concerned with the passing of all states, not just turning from sorrow to

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[15]Malone, p. 6; Joyce Hill, ed., *Old English Minor Heroic Poems* (Durham, 1983, repr. 1987) p. 43.

[16]Bosworth-Toller, *s.v.* 'seonu-bend'; Grein himself gives no such explanation for his emendation, but in his glossary under 'ben' he says 'Mit diesem Wort vermengen die MSS. oft den plur. von *bend*'. See *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. by C. W. M. Grein, 4 vols (Göttingen: Wiegand, 1857-64), vol. 1, p. 250; vol. 2, p. 90, *s.v.* 'ben'; vol. 3, p. 439, *s.v.* 'seonu-ben'.

[17]For both, see Malone, loc. cit.

[18]R. E, Kaske, 'Weland and the *wurmas* in *Deor*', *ES*, 44 (1963), 190-1.

[19]p. 6, n. 2.

joy.[20] Beadohild's giving birth to a hero (the OE analogues together with *Þiðreks saga* justify us in assuming that to be the outcome of her pregnancy) is presumably a happy ending, as is the cessation of Eormanric's rule; but we do not know the end of the story of Mæðhild and Geat, nor that of Deor himself. As will be suggested below with respect to the legend of Þiðrek, the difficulties in understanding the allusion to Ðeodric ruling (or possessing) 'þritig wintra I Mæringa burg' (18-19) may be resolved if we simply assume an inevitable end to his rule, rather than a fortunate end to an unhappy state. Similarly, though Welund die in the snake-pit, in the approved fashion, his suffering still ends.

It may be worth mentioning in passing the association of worms with the pains of Hell, stemming, no doubt, from Mark 9.44 &c.: 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched';[21] but gaining extra popularity because of its handy alliteration with 'woe'. Vercelli Homily II ends a description of such torments with '7 þara wyrma ȝryre' (l. 72), with later '7 þam wælslitendan wyrmum to æte' (ll. 82-83) and the full phrase in an alliterative tirade: 'in morþre 7 on mane, in susle 7 on sare, on wean 7 on wurmum' (ll. 89-90).[22] Several uses in the religious verse are clearly to do with damnation and the destruction of the body, so it is possible that that is the meaning here, especially given the predominantly religious nature of the contents of the Exeter Book, with which *Deor*'s moralising tone is consistent.[23]

2.4.3: The Franks casket

One remaining English treatment of the legend is probably the scene shown on the front of the Franks casket. The runic inscription around this panel has nothing to do with the scenes depicted, so we must rely on our own interpretation of the left-hand picture. (The right-hand one has the caption 'magi', so we know that it shows the Adoration of the Magi.) A man holding tongs and with a hammer nearby, therefore presumably a smith, is carrying out some transaction with a woman, while a body lies at his feet. Another woman stands behind the first, with something like

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[20]See Whitney F. Bolton, 'Boethius, Alfred, and *Deor* Again,' *Modern Philology* 69 (1971-72), 222-27, especially 224.

[21]Authorised Version.

[22]*Die Vercelli-Homilien*, ed. by Max Förster, Part I, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa XII (Hamburg: Grand, 1932).

[23]Note particularly *Sat* 335: 'wean and witu and wyrma þreat;' also *Exo* 537, *Rim* 75, *Soul I* 22, 124.

a bag, and behind her a man is catching birds. Wayland is the most famous smith in Germanic lore, so it is perhaps inevitable that scholars identify him with this figure,[24] but there are other good reasons for the conclusion to be drawn.

The least useful supposition is that the smith's leg is bent, therefore he must be lame, therefore this must depict a version of the legend agreeing with that in *Vǫlundarkviða* in which the hero is hamstrung.[25] Such scholars ignore the fact that the leg of one of the Magi on the same panel is also bent, and every person on the left side of the casket has a bent leg. Far-reaching conclusions could be derived from such an observation, the most reasonable being that this artist tended to carve people with their legs bent, and so this is not a peculiarity of one figure on which to construct theories. However, the other legs are bent to a much lesser degree than that of the smith figure, so it is legitimate to consider it a distinctive characteristic of his, but only after the other figures have been taken into account. Proponents of this theory similarly weaken their argument by failing to point out the sharp incision across the smith's knee, which is not apparent on any other figure.

It is, however, evident that the figure is a smith and that he is associated with both women and birds. Such an unusual combination points very decidedly towards an identification with Wayland. The exact nature of the scene and so of the legend represented therein is uncertain, but some suggestions can be advanced with confidence. No head is visible on the prostrate body, and Davidson remarks that 'there seems to be a human head in the tongs'.[26] That is very reminiscent of Wayland's killing of the princes in *Þiðreks saga* and *Vǫlundarkviða*, also referred to in *Deor* 8.

'There is disagreement as to whether the figure of the princess appears twice on this panel, once holding the ring and again carrying the drugged drink'.[27] If the second female figure is an attendant on Beadohild then we have here a closer resemblance between the casket and the saga (which records that a maidservant went with the princess on her visit to Velent) than

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[24]'The figures have long been accepted as those of the smith Weland and the princess Beadohild' (H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'The Smith and the Goddess: Two Figures on the Franks Casket from Auzon', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 3 (1969), 216-26).

[25]E.g. Davidson, 'Weland the Smith', p. 146: 'one bent leg which may denote his lameness'.

[26]'Weland the Smith,' *loc. cit.*

[27]Davidson, 'The Smith and the Goddess', p. 219, n. 10.

between casket and poem. But such a detail might easily have been missed out in the poem, particularly as it would be a precaution against precisely what the smith does. If a servant had been present, Wayland would have had more difficulty in deflowering the princess, and the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* may well have preferred not to give himself the problem of circumventing that.

The bird-catcher depicted on the panel has at least two possible explanations, both from *Þiðreks saga*. It may be, as is normally thought, Egil providing feathers for his brother's escape, but there is no sign that he has been shooting the birds as one would naturally expect -- although the saga merely says that Egil 'veiðir allz kyns fvgla oc fær velent' (ch.130, p. 125). The top of the casket shows an archer and bears the runes 'ægili', generally reckoned to mean Egil. That might be a good reason to suppose that the character on the front is not Egil, as it is not clear that any other figure appears on more than one panel (although Davidson, 'The Smith and the Goddess', presents a case for the Beadohild figure being repeated). Nor is there any apparent connection between the stories depicted on any two faces of the casket, so the top is no evidence for the side. If it is not Egil who is catching the birds, then it may have to do with Wayland's method of preparing his metal for forging by passing it through the digestive systems of fowls (*Þs* ch. 104, pp. 98-99). Here is another possible agreement between *Þiðreks saga* and English tradition without parallel in *Vǫlundarkviða*.

2.5: Vǫlundarkviða

Vǫlundarkviða has (as has already been seen) dominated perceptions of Wayland. One major problem with the poem, for our present purposes, is the uncertainty of its provenance. The names are mostly German in form and the diction and metre may be influenced by English.[28] For example, 'alvitr' (stt. 1, 3, 10) is most closely paralleled by OE 'ælwiht' and seems to have been misunderstood by the prose editor, whose introduction applies the term to Hervor alone, whereas the verse uses it of all three maidens. The half-line 'um sofnaði' (st. 28) is of a metrical type very seldom found in Eddic verse but quite often in Old English. There are verbal links between *Vǫlundarkviða* and the mention in *Deor*, such as 'nauðir' (st. 11) and 'nede' (l. 5), in which there

[28]See John McKinnell, 'The Context of *Vǫlundarkviða*', and *Tvær kviður fornar: Völundarkviða og Atlakviða, með skýringum*, ed. by Jón Helgason, 2nd edn (Reykjavik: Heimskringla, 1962), pp. 27-29.

are the same problems of interpretation; or 'aukin' (st. 36) and 'eacen' (l. 11) meaning 'pregnant', which is a usage uncommon in Old Norse but less so in Old English. Neither Cleasby-Vigfusson nor Fritzner cites any explicit suggestion of pregnancy for 'auka', whereas Bosworth-Toller gives two instances of 'eacan' that obviously refer to pregnancy.[29] It is, however, worth inquiring how much of the lack of parallels in ON is due to lack of occasion to discuss pregnancy.

The name Vǫlund, however, cannot be derived directly from the German 'Wielant', nor from the English 'Weland'. It must have had an *a* as in the later French form 'Galant' (probably introduced by the Normans) -- and also found in the Trier MS of *Waltharius*, but that is late (fifteenth century) and contradicted by the other complete MSS of the poem, including the earliest two, the late eleventh or early twelfth century Brussels one and the late eleventh century Paris one, which are derived from the same original as the Trier one and are reckoned to be the most reliable authorities.[30] Anyway, *Vǫlundarkviða* represents a distinct form of the story, the one full account to be compared with that in *Þiðreks saga*. If it is seen to be substantially different from the tradition which can be extracted from the German texts, then it may be considered an example of characteristically Scandinavian treatment of the story. If *Vǫlundarkviða* agrees with the German sources against *Þiðreks saga* then the saga's version may be reckoned peculiarly Scandinavian. I shall analyse the two complete accounts together, assessing points of similarity and contrast as I come to them.

2.6: Þiðreks saga *and* Vǫlundarkviða

2.6.1: Wayland's family

One most obvious point of difference between *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Þiðreks saga* is the hero's family. In the poem he seems to be an elf, although the prose introduction calls him a son of the king of the Finns, and the saga disagrees with both in making him the son of the giant Vaði.

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[29]Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2nd edn with supplement by Sir William A. Craigie (Oxford: OUP, 1957, repr. 1969); Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, 4 vols (Christiania: Den norske Forlagsforening; New York: Osterholm; Leipzig: Twietmeyer; London: Trübner; Paris: Nilsson; St. Petersburg: Ricker, 1886-96).

[30]Trier, Stadtbibl. 2002; Brussels, Bibl. Royale, 5380-84; Paris, Bibl. Nationale, Latin 8488A: *Waltharius and Ruodlieb*, ed. and trans. by Dennis M. Kratz, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, series A, 13 (New York and London: Garland, 1984), pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

Neither poet nor editor makes any mention of his son (Viðga in *Þiðreks saga*), but that can be easily explained by the poem's ending with the mere revelation of Bǫðvild's pregnancy, whereas the saga is more encyclopædic and includes the story of Velent mainly as a prelude to the exploits of Viðga. It is noteworthy that only *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Deor* name the princess (Bǫðvild/Beadohild), except for the curious remark in MS A of *Þiðreks saga*, 'Nidungur kongur atti ij sonu og eina dóttur er Heren hiet' (ch. 125, p. 120). The name appears also much later in the B-version of the Danish ballad 'Kong Diderik og hans Kæmper', as Buodell or Bodild.[31]

The two Norse texts (or three, counting the *Vǫlundarkviða* prose separately) certainly agree in making Wayland's ancestry somehow magical; Finns are almost as alien in (though familiar to) the mediæval Germanic imagination as elves and giants.[32] The saga shows him denying that he is a troll (ch. 93, p. 84), thus suggesting that there is some reason for him to be mistaken for one, and crying as he flies 'nv em ec fvgl oc nv em ec maðr' (ch. 133, p. 129), so that he does claim (if facetiously) some non-human qualities. The Brut's 'aluisc' is worth attention, but it is difficult to ascertain how much it relates to genuine Germanic tradition surviving in England, as the name has been changed along with much else in the poem -- metre, sense of national identity and so on. The *Heldenbuch*'s two giants (*v. sup.*) are very reminiscent of the two dwarfs (those two races are little differentiated -- note that Regin is attributed to both in the *Elder Edda*; a dwarf in the prose introduction to *Reginsmál* and a giant in *Fafnismál* st. 38) who teach Velent smithcraft and threaten his life should his father be late in collecting him.

Vǫlundarkviða gives Vǫlund two brothers and names him last, giving the impression that he is the youngest, although the list may be as 'Schütte's law' suggests, with the member of greatest general importance at the beginning (Egil the famous archer, associated with the William Tell legend in the saga and used in kennings for arrows by such skalds as Eyvind Finnsson, Hallfreð vandræðaskáld, Egil Skallagrímsson, Vǫlu-Stein and Þórkel hamarskáld, so the Scandinavian tradition clearly predates this saga; *Hemings þáttr* also confirms his reputation as a

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[31]*Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, ed. by Svend Grundtvig and others (Copenhagen: Samfund til den danske Literaturs Fremme, 1853-1948), 1, ed. by Svend Grundtvig (1853), no. 7, pp. 63-122; v. pp. 100, 119.

[32]R. I. Page, 'Lapland Sorcerors', *SBVS*, 16 (1962-65), 215-32, outlines the evidence for the magical reputation of Lapps or Finns; see his footnote 1, p. 215, for a brief discussion of the problem of nomenclature.

bowman) and the one of greatest immediate interest at the end (Vǫlund, the hero of the poem).[33] *Þiðreks saga* brings in only Egil, and that almost as an afterthought, with no prior indication that Vaði had another son than Velent. It will be observed that Egil does not share in the family alliteration; that consideration, together with the word 'young' applied to him at his first appearance, might indicate that he is a younger brother -- if the German original knew of him as a brother at all. There is no evidence of him in any German text, and he may have been introduced by a Scandinavian redactor. He has been integrated into the saga's account, but his absence would not damage the structure. He may appear on the Franks casket, but that has no relevance to the question of his being connected with this story in Germany.

It is interesting to note that the 'William Tell' legend is found in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, areas of course occupied by Scandinavians for many years and therefore with much likelihood of mutual influence in their storytelling.

> 'Why, that is a corruption of the story of William Tell,' I rather uncourteously remarked, on hearing for the first time this M'Hardy legend.
>
> The old lady who had just related it, retorted with considerable warmth, and ended by asking *when* the story of William Tell took place.
>
> 'About the year 1307,' I replied.
>
> 'There,' she said with such an air of triumph, 'I thought that: the William Tell story happened in 1307, and ours in 1060 or thereabouts, more than 200 years before. Na, na! our story is nae a corruption of William Tell, though William Tell's may weel be a corruption of ours.'[34]

The author goes on to record an alternative explanation of how the M'Hardys got their name, which she regards as 'more likely' (p. 104). Still, the existence of the legend in the thirteenth-century *Þiðreks saga* must cast doubt on the priority of the fourteenth-century Swiss version. That does not mean that the Scots necessarily have the right of it: a Hebridean account

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[33]For an account of 'Schütte's law' see R. W. Chambers, *Widsith: A Study in Old English Heroic Legend* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 255-56: 'Schütte formulates the law that, in Germanic name-lists, the first member is the one of greatest general importance; the last, the one in which the framers of the tradition have the most special interest' (p. 255). For the original, see Gudmund Schütte, *Oldsagn om Godtjod* (Copenhagen: Hagerup, 1907), pp. 94-117, especially pp. 95-101: 'Faktum er, at Bagvægt er et af de *allermest typiske Formkendemærker for vore Forfædres Oldliteratur i alle dens Grene.* Forvægt hersker ganske vist samtidige, men den bruges mest ved Staffagestoffet, de fornemme Rangspersoner, de stående Topfigurer; de egentlige Handlingsbærere udmærkes ikke ved Forvægt, men ved Bagvægt' (p. 96).

[34]Elizabeth Taylor, *The Braemar Highlands: Their Tales, Traditions, and History* (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1869), pp. 102-03.

features Gillour MacCraine, supposed to have died in the seventeenth century at the age of one hundred and eighty.[35] It is exactly the same story with identical phrasing and only the names changed. How it has spread across Europe remains to be ascertained, but a fair guess is that the Norsemen could have been agents in the diffusion, either learning it in Scotland and transferring it to the continent or vice versâ. If the former can be established, that makes it all the more probable that Egil is a Scandinavian innovation in the saga.

2.6.2: Wayland's wives

More obviously significant is the presence of the valkyries or swan-maidens in *Vǫlundarkviða* and their absence from the saga. In the saga Velent is apprenticed to Mímir from the age of nine to twelve (ch. 84, pp. 73-74) and then to the two dwarfs from thirteen to fourteen (ch. 84-85, pp. 74-76). Immediately on leaving them he journeys to Jutland and enters Niðung's service (ch. 91-92, p. 83), and there is no suggestion of a lengthy gap between his expulsion from court (ch. 117, p. 111) and his attempted vengeance (ch. 119, pp. 112-113), which results in his capture (ch. 119, p. 113). It would be difficult for him to meet and marry 'Hervor alvitr', as in *Vǫlundarkviða*, let alone live with her for seven years or more, as in the *Vǫlundarkviða* prose; and the picture of the three brothers living and hunting together in Úlfdalir will not fit into this account either. There is no room for the brides in the saga, and equally the poem has no room for many of the incidents in *Þiðreks saga*'s narrative, such as Velent's period of service to King Niðung before he is taken captive and maimed.

One would certainly expect the compiler of *Þiðreks saga* to include such incidents if he knew of them, but the elliptical style of *Vǫlundarkviða* gives more room for doubt about what the poet did or did not know. In particular, the series of incidents at the royal court -- the contest with the smith (ch. 97-109, pp. 89-104), the making of Regin's image (ch. 100-101, pp. 95-96), the altercation over the victory-stone (ch. 112-117, pp. 106-111) -- might conceivably have been omitted in the lay for the sake of poetic economy. But just as the course of events in *Þiðreks saga* seems to preclude those peculiar to *Vǫlundarkviða*, so the poem's story seems to exclude the saga's. Instead of going on a journey alone in a marvellous boat, Vǫlund remains at the home he

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[35]*Stories of Jura*, collected by Rev. Charles Robertson, ed. by Rev. Peter Youngson (Kirriemuir: Youngson, 1993), p. 19.

shared with his brothers. There is no suggestion of any acquaintance between him and Níðuð prior to the king's imprisoning the smith, nor of the smith's requesting the princess, although these two features may simply have been suppressed. But there seems, at least to a romantic modern mind, to be a contradiction between Vǫlund's apparent devotion to Hlǫðvér's daughter and vengeful seduction of Bǫðvild and Velent's willingness -- even eagerness -- to marry Niðung's daughter. The troth-plighting of Velent and the princess (ch. 129, p. 125) looks impossible in *Vǫlundarkviða*, but such ambiguous remarks as 'Nú berr Bǫðvildr brúðar minnar | [. . .] bauga rauða' (st. 19) and 'ver qván eigim, þá er þér kunnið' (st. 33) may suggest that Vǫlund regards Bǫðvild as a replacement for his original wife, and the word 'friðil' (st. 29) could denote an emotional attachment -- although this is the only instance of the word mentioned by Cleasby-Vigfusson and Fritzner. Cleasby-Vigfusson's 'a lover, gallant' begs the question, and it might have as 'bad' a sense as the prose usage of the feminine equivalent 'friðla, frilla': 'a harlot, concubine'.

It cannot be proven how much the author of *Vǫlundarkviða* knew and chose to omit and how far the text as it stands reflects general ON traditions, but it looks as if the story on which the poem is based is quite distinct from that preserved in *Þiðreks saga*. It will be appropriate to summarise here how far the saga's account corresponds with the German sources and how far with the Norse, specifying all the important points of difference and resemblance. It will become clear in the process that *Vǫlundarkviða*, despite its names, represents a distinct tradition from the German remains.

2.7: Conclusions

Wayland is always a great smith, and presumably of noble blood; a better man (syllan monn) than Niðhad in *Deor* (admittedly not necessarily a comment on his social status, but Old English knows no low-born heroes); a duke in the *Heldenbuch*; a king's grandson in *Þiðreks saga*; a king's son in the prose introduction to *Vǫlundarkviða* and white-necked (often an indication of nobility, cf. *Rígsþula* 29) in the poem itself. Germany and England agree with the saga that he is the father of Viðga; and while no son is explicitly given to him in the lay there can be little doubt that it is to be understood there as well. However, that more or less exhausts the Germanic consensus, and national differences arise in other elements of characterisation.

Þiðreks saga and *Vǫlundarkviða* are the only two sources that definitely make the figure supernatural. Admittedly the other sources say nothing against it, and Laȝamon lends his dubious support to the idea. Minor characters of a non-human nature are divided between valkyries or swan-maidens in *Vǫlundarkviða* and giants or dwarfs in *Þiðreks saga* and the *Heldenbuch*, which would make the saga rather continental than Scandinavian. (The swan-maidens may be paralleled by the dove-maidens in *Friedrich von Schwaben*, but other than that and the hero's pseudonym there is little evidence to make the romance a version of Wayland's legend.) Unlike the German materials, and in agreement with *Vǫlundarkviða*, the saga introduces his brother Egil. The fact that the absence of this character would not fundamentally affect the course of events in the narrative makes it reasonable to suppose that here a Scandinavian redactor may have supplemented the German narrative from his own native tradition. There would be little difficulty in adding the same incident to the story as contained in *Vǫlundarkviða*, so it might have been known to the poet.

This section of *Þiðreks saga*, then, takes its plot, as the prologue states, from German sources, but as well as translating it for a Norse audience the redactor may have inserted supplementary material from the Scandinavian version. The material I am calling distinctively Scandinavian survives nowhere else, other than possibly on the Franks casket, but it is closer to what is found in Norse than to anything in German -- although the form of the name 'Egil' is acceptable as German, like many of the others.[36] The Franks casket, whether or not it shows this scene, does not seriously damage this hypothesis, because many considerations make it reasonable to suggest that Norse and English shared a common Wayland tradition. However, no explanation by means of Anglo-Scandinavian tradition versus continental is suitable for the other-worldly origin of the Wayland-figure in *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Þiðreks saga* and the *Brut*; as pointed out above, no sources deny it; and furthermore it is an integral part of the story in *Þiðreks saga*, so it cannot easily be counted as a simple addition by the redactor.

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[36]'Egill er að sönnu norrænt nafn [. . .] Þetta nafn í myndum sem *Agil, Eigil, Egil, Egila* var einnig þýzkt' (*Tvær kviður fornar*, ed. by Jón Helgason, p. 27).

Chapter 3: Vaði

3.1: Summary

The manner of Vaði's birth is narrated twice in *Þiðreks saga*, in the two versions of *Vilkina saga*. Unfortunately, the first account is in a damaged portion of the manuscript (ch. 36, p. 46), but the beginning of it is very similar to that of the second (ch. 324, pp. 63-65), so it seems likely that they are mostly identical in the essentials. There are differences in wording, and in the ordering of Vilkinus' two sons, Vaði and Nordian, but in both Vilkinus, while on a journey, meets a woman in a wood and sleeps with her. She is a 'siokona', 'en þat a æðrli isio *ok* synizt alande sem konor' (ch. 36, p. 46), or 'þat a æðli i sæ sem skrimsl en syniz al*an*di sem kona' (ch. 324, p. 64). She bears him a son, Vaði (ch. 324, p. 65; cf. ch.84, p. 73) who grows up to be a giant (ch. 84, p. 73).

Vaði's life-story is told (ch. 84-89, pp. 73-80) as an adjunct to that of his son Velent (ch. 84, p. 73). That has been summarised in my previous chapter, and I shall merely point out three additional features: taking Velent to the home of the dwarfs to whom he is to be apprenticed, Vaði comes to a sound where there is no boat, and so 'tækr han*n* svæinin*n* *ok* sætr a oxl ser *ok* væðr ivir sundit' (ch. 85, p. 75); before going home again he hides a sword for his son's defence lest he fail to collect him (ch. 87. p. 78); and while waiting to collect his son, he is killed by a landslide (ch. 89, p. 80).

3.2: Survey of sources

The distribution of legends about Wade is of a quite different type from the widespread knowledge of Wayland. Wayland appears all over mediæval Germanic literature as the great smith, and a few stories are told of him with a noticeable amount in common. Wade (or a figure with that name or a cognate) also appears in diverse sources, but they have little in common other than the similarity of the name. Of Wada in *Widsith* 22 we know nothing with any certainty other than that he 'weold [...] Hælsingum', of whom we can only surmise that they were a Baltic people, to be linked with such place names as Hälsingborg, Helsingør and Helsinki. The fearsome warrior Wate von den Stürmen in *Kudrun* is neither a giant nor linked with Wielant. Middle English

authors conventionally include Wade in lists of heroes with no specific information about him. An extravagant story of Gado appears in the Latin of Walter Map from mediæval England. All of these must of course be discussed in more detail to see if, despite the apparent disparities, some consistent features may be discerned. Even if the traditions are found to be utterly incompatible, that in itself may be of valuable significance for the evaluation of this portion of *Piðreks saga.*

It is unfortunate that, so far as I can ascertain, there is no other mediæval Norse account of this character. Gudni Jónsson lists no Vaði among the names in his *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, nor is there any record of him in either Edda. E. H. Lind cites 'Vaði risi' from *Piðreks saga* alone, together with two occurences of the name Vaði for real historical persons, as well as one possible instance in a patronymic and one as a by-name; sufficient examples to show that the place-names Vastad (from Vada-, Vadar-, Wadastadir) in Vestby and Valand (from Vade-, Vadæland) in Holme, Mandal need have nothing to do with our giant.[1] There is, therefore, no independent source of Scandinavian provenance with which to compare the *Piðreks saga* material and contrast *Kudrun*. Even if it is concluded that England and Scandinavia share their traditions of Wayland, that is no guarantee that they have their traditions of Wade in common, so the English material here cannot be used as evidence for the Scandinavian legend without independent confirmation that the two are more closely linked to each other than to the continental accounts for Wade as well as for Wayland.

3.3: Widsith *and* Kudrun

Two references to Wade which are certainly earlier than *Piðreks saga* may conveniently be discussed together. Wate in *Kudrun* is a supporter of king Hetel and wins for him Hild, the daughter of king Hagen; and it is noteworthy that *Widsith* 22 names Wada in the line immediately after Hagena and (probably) Heoden:

> Casere weold Creacum ond Cælic Finnum,
> Hagena Holmrygum ond Heoden [MS henden] Glommum.
> Witta weold Swæfum, Wada Hælsingum,
> Meaca Myrgingum, Mearchealf Hundingum.

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[1]Lind, *Norsk-Isländske Dopnamn; Supplementband.*

Chambers says that this proximity is 'probably not by mere coincidence', but Malone (no enemy of turning juxtaposition of names into unattested forms of stories) disagrees and points out that Wada is separated from Hagena and Heoden by Witta, so that creates a difficulty for the idea that they are deliberately listed together because they appear in the same story.[2] It may also be mentioned that the two lines are in different couplets (or sets of four half-lines with 'weold' in the first), which may have structural significance and so separate the names even more effectively.

Kudrun certainly associates Wate with what is known as the 'Endless Battle',[3] but the evidence of *Widsith* is doubtful. If Wada is connected with that legend, then English tradition agrees in this instance with the continental against Scandinavian sources, for Norse has no trace of Vaði in its accounts of the story, nor any hint of the Endless Battle in *Þiðreks saga*. We do have evidence that the legend was known in early mediæval England, as it figures in section 42 of the *Marvels of the East*, an Anglo-Latin collection of wonders.[4] However, that version names no names and has only three protagonists: two men fighting ('germani fratres', which almost certainly means that they are brothers by birth, but could be construed as meaning that they are German) and a woman healing them. That being the case it is unsafe to use English material as a guide to the Scandinavian version.

Meanwhile *Kudrun* may still be of use as a source of characterisation of the figure, even if the story bears no relation to that in the saga; the same person may appear, and be portrayed consistently, in two otherwise unconnected narratives. The poem makes Wate a kinsman and honoured retainer of King Hetel and uncle of Horant king of Denmark, with a country of his own (Stürmen) to rule. Vaði is also of royal blood but subordinate to his near relative; but that is so common in heroic legend as to mean very little. Wate is thoroughly warlike and is described as grey-haired, with the conventional epithets 'der vil küene' and 'der alte', none of which are applied to Vaði. There is no hint of any supernatural blood in Wate, whereas Vaði is a giant and the son

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[2]R. W. Chambers, *Widsith: A Study in Old English Heroic Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 105; *Widsith*, ed. by Kemp Malone, (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962), p. 207. See also Malone's treatment of Secca, Becca, Seafola and Þeodric in his *Studies in Heroic Literature and in Current Speech*, ed. by Stefán Einarsson and Norman E. Eliason (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959), pp. 158-63 in particular.

[3]Ed. by Karl Bartsch, 5th edn, rev. by Karl Stackmann (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1965); especially Aventiure 8, 16-18, 27-29.

[4]Ed. by M. R. James (London: Roxburghe Club, 1929) (p. 23, trans. p. 30).

of a 'sækona'. (There appears to be no other occurrence of the word.) Wate brings up both Hetel and Ortwin and is a major political figure, in complete contrast to Vaði, whose sole interaction with the rest of the world, it is perhaps not too much to say, is sending his own son away to be brought up by others. An important event in the German poem is Wate's commandeering of some pilgrims and their ships for the Heteling war effort; an action which brings religious condemnation on him. The saga, on the other hand, only displays a religious interest towards its end, when Vaði is long dead. Vaði is responsible for transporting a dependant across the sea, but, true to his name, he wades (ch. 85, p. 75).

3.4: Miscellaneous mentions

Wate, then, seems to have little but his name in common with Vaði. This need not surprise us, as *Kudrun* provides a good analogy for such disparate namesakes; its Hagen is quite distinct from the more famous Hagen of the *Nibelungenlied*, who is like no-one so much as Wate. Wada is a popular name in Old English (Searle lists eleven other bearers of the name as well as a 'Wadan hlæw', two Wades, two Wados and one each of Wadda, Waddo, Gaddo and Gadd,[5] and Wade survives as a surname down to the present day) and there is no reason why more than one hero should not be so called -- indeed another Wate, no more than a name, appears in *Dietrichs Flucht* (3919).

One figure who combines features of *Kudrun*'s Wate and the saga's Vaði is Wate in *Dukus Horant*.[6] The story is in essentials that of the second part of *Kudrun*: Wate and Horant win the fair Hilde for king Etene. This Wate, however, is a giant, the brother of 'Witolt mit der stangen' and Asprian (names also familiar from *Þiðreks saga* but again with quite different functions for their characters; Viðolf mittumstangan and Aspilian are sons of Vaði's half-brother Nordian, both giants, the latter the one who terrorises Heimir's monastery and in slaying whom Heimir is revealed). The belligerent one of the family appears to be 'Witolt der ungehoire', whom Horant has to restrain (FF. 62-63), but they are all admonished later: 'ir scholt oir vechten lan' (F. 66). Wate may have behaved more like the figure in *Kudrun* in the latter part of this poem, but

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[5]*Onomasticon.*

[6]Ed by P. F. Ganz, F. Norman and W. Schwarz (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964).

that is lost beyond recovery. There is no indication that he might have had anything but his size in common with Vaði.

3.5: Middle English references

3.5.1: Vernacular allusions

The English references to Wade are almost unanimous in implying that he is a mighty man of valour and saying no more about him. He tends to be mentioned along with other assorted heroes, whose stories we often know. The *Laud Troy Book*, for example, says that: 'Many speken of men that romances rede I That were sumtyme doughti in dede;' begins its list 'Off Bevis, Gy, and of Gauwayn,' and ends 'Off Hauelok, Horne, & of Wade' (ll. 11-21).[7] Caxton's edition of Malory cites him as an example of prowess along with three great knights of the Round Table: 'were thou as wyghte as euer was Wade, or Launcelot, Trystram, or the good kyighte Syr Lamaryk' (Book VII, chapter IX).[8] Wade does not figure in the Winchester MS, and Vinaver remarks that 'The comparison was sufficiently common at the time for *C*[axton] to have added it of his own accord' -- a direct contradiction of R. M. Wilson's suggestion that Malory 'simply got his name from the alliterative *Morte Arthure* of which he made extensive use', although the (formulaic?) alliteration of 'wight as Wade' is likely to have prompted the use of that proper name after the adjective.[9] It is tempting to regard this juxtaposition in Caxton as placing Wade at King Arthur's court, but he never appears there in person. There is no explicit indication that he is somehow different from other heroes of romance, but it may be significant that in none of these Middle English lists does Wade come in the middle. The *Fasciculus Morum* puts him in 'eluenlond' with Onewyn, last heard of as Unwen in *Widsith* 114 and as mysterious as his companion.[10] Interestingly, they are both mentioned in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, but widely

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[7]Ed. by J. E. Wülfing, EETS OS 121, 122.

[8]*Caxton's Malory*, ed. by James W. Spisak and William Matthews, 2 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), 1, 167.

[9]*The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, 3rd edn rev. by P. J. C. Field, 3 vols (Oxford: OUP, 1990), p. 1436, note to p. 308, l. 19 (i); R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952), p. 18.

[10]*Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. and transl. by Siegfried Wenzel (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), p. 578.

separated (Wade l. 964, Unwine [*sic*] l. 2868) and with no hint that they have anything in common other than their status as great heroic exempla.[11]

All that can be gleaned from the above references and others of a similar nature is that Wade is a fabled hero; and it is reasonable to assume that he must have had at least one story. Unusually, Chaucer both mentions Wade by himself and gives additional detail. Having Pandare (or an anonymous servant) telling a 'tale of Wade' (*Troilus and Criseyde* III 614) is not very informative, but in the Merchant's Tale there is reference to 'Wades boot', on which 'olde wydwes [...] I [...] konne so muchel craft' (*Canterbury Tales* Fragment IV 1423-24).[12] This has presented a perennial challenge to commentators, who have been able to offer no additional information since Speght's assertion in his 1598 edition that the boat's name is Guingelot, and that offering has no other support (it is clearly a form of Gringalet, normally Gawain's horse), nor do we know if, even if accurate, it represents tradition known to the poet.

It seems unlikely that we will ever be sure of the exact connotations of Chaucer's remark, but it does at least show that the hero had some watery associations. That leads on well to the story told by Walter Map, but it is fitting to mention first the six lines sometimes asserted to be from 'the lost *Tale of Wade*'[13] but only certainly known to be put in Wade's mouth, because of the preceding remark, 'Ita quod dicere possunt cum Wade':

> Summe sende ylues
> and summe sende nadderes:
> summe sende nikeres
> the bi den watere wunien.
> Nister man nenne
> bute Ildebrand onne.[14]

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[11]*King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1986):

> 964 Ware thou wyghttere thane Wade or Wawayne owthire,
> Thow wynnys no wyrchipe, I warne the before;
> 2867 Ought never such honour none of our elders,
> Unwine ne Absolon ne none of these other!

[12]*The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and others (Houghton Mifflin, 1987; Oxford: OUP, 1988); for the next sentence see p. 886, note to l. 1424.

[13]Chambers, p. 98; cf. W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1908; repr. 1931), p. 180: 'The recent discovery of a fragment of the *Song of Wade*'.

[14]Quoted in Chambers, p. 98.

What these non-human creatures are doing is anybody's guess, but the explicit connection with water, together with Wade's boat and Vaði's 'sækona' mother, leads to the surmise that the hero is necessarily somehow aquatic. It is particularly intriguing that he knows of Hildebrand, as that hero also appears in *Þiðreks saga* but there the two never come in contact (although Hildibrand is a colleague of Vaði's grandson Viðga).

3.5.2: Map, *De Nugis Curialium*

Wade features with his boat in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*, II XVII, already alluded to.[15] He is called in Latin Gado and made the son of the king of the Vandals. He serves king Offa and is a doughty supporter in time of need -- the story ends with a bloodbath that would gladden the heart of Wate. Yet Gado is rather more 'courtly' in Map's tale, not in giving quarter to some of his defeated enemies (that is merely because the victors 'dedignantur persequi,' p. 174) but in saluting them before the battle, because 'bone consuetudinis reminisci iuuat; nullus enim faceti moris omittendus est calculus,' (p. 172). We may recognise the warrior of *Kudrun* in the Roman emperor's question, 'nunquid tuus ingressus pacificus, qui lites et rixas uenaris in orbe?' (p. 170). But Gado's motivation is quite unlike that of Wate: 'eas inuestigo sollicitus et inuentas totis prosterno uiribus' (p.170). Chambers finds two common attributes of Gado and Wate: wisdom and white hair;[16] and I can add no more, unless one count the shared contrast with Vaði in the description of Gado as 'non [...] ipse monstrum instar Alcide secundum giganteam altitudinem, uel Achillis secundum fatalitatem' (p. 166).

Kemp Malone manages to link Map's Gado with the Wada of *Widsith* by examining tribes and rulers.[17] He notes that l. 22 pairs Wada with Witta, who rules the Swæfe. That people is linked with the Angles on their other two appearances: 'Engle ond Swæfe' (44) and 'Mid Englum ic wæs ond mid Swæfum' (61). The first of these two is in the reference to Offa's drawing of the border with the Myrgings. 'I conceive that in the tradition represented by the *Widsith* poet Wada's friendship was with Witta, and that in later tradition it was extended to Offa because Witta's tribe,

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[15]Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 166-75.
[16]Chambers, p.99.
[17]'An Anglo-Latin Version of the Hjaðningavíg', *Spec*, 39 (1964), 35-44.

if not he himself, belonged to the Offa story: since the Sweves fought for Offa, their king's friend was made to fight for Offa too.'[18]

Chambers speaks of the marvellous properties of Gado's boat but does not give details from Map's account.[19] Details follow in my next paragraph, but first it is worth bringing to mind the tree-trunk that Velent turns into a submarine (ch. 91, pp. 82-83). There is no suggestion that any version of a Wade legend has him travelling under the sea, but if he is associated with Wayland some of his attributes may have been transferred to his son, perhaps suitably altered to show off the smith's craftsmanship. This could be the first clear indication that there is an ancestral connection between the story of Vaði as found in *Þiðreks saga* and the other legends of Wade.

Unfortunately, Chambers' enthusiasm has carried him to an unwarranted conclusion. He claims that 'The boat which enables Gado to go to the uttermost Indies, to accomplish his adventure there, and to return in time to thwart the emperor, a boat which carries him magically to the spot where there is work for him to do, can be none other than Guingelot.'[20] But Map says nothing of magic, nor for that matter of any special efficacy in the boat, which he does not even explicitly mention: 'Gado expeditis Indorum angustiis ad patris sui regnum per mare properans, uentis uoto suo peruersis, sed in subsidium Anglorum a Deo conuersis' (p. 170). Chambers reckons that 'Map has rationalized the story, and has toned down, without obliterating, its supernatural features.' Hartland is wiser in concluding his account of the tradition with the remark that 'The earlier form of the tale is irrecoverable'.[21]

3.6: Conclusions

Wade's boat, then, is not a connecting feature of the stories associated with such a figure. Other common properties are hard to find. One may state in conclusion that, though Wade is a popular figure in mediæval heroic literature in the Germanic nations, it is difficult to be sure that

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[18]p. 43.
[19]p.99.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, trans. by Montague R. James, with historical notes by John Edward Lloyd, ed. by E. Sidney Hartland (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1923), p. 90, n. 2.

Vaði is the same character. His story bears no resemblance to the only German analogue and there is no evidence whereby to deduce the character of any Scandinavian analogues. It seems unlikely that he is a complete invention by the maker of the saga; rather it looks as if a continental tradition is preserved here and nowhere else, but it is impossible to ascertain if it has been altered at all by the Norse redactor.

Chapter 4: Viðga

4.1: Summary

Viðga Velentsson enjoys great celebrity in *Þiðreks saga* as Þiðrek's strongest retainer, a reputation consistent with that of Wittich in the German Dietrich cycle of poems. The son of Velent, he slays giants (e.g. ch. 303, pp. 361-366) and fights champions on Þiðrek's behalf (e.g. ch. 317, pp. 27-29) until he transfers his service to Erminrek (ch. 342, p. 157). When Þiðrek and Erminrek break their friendship (ch. 345, pp. 169-77), Viðga is obliged to do battle against his former lord (ch. 373-81, pp. 231-49), fleeing from whom he meets his end (ch. 381, pp. 248-49; see below, p. 5). The second fragment of the OE *Waldere* also makes Widia a supporter of Þeodric and indicates that he released his master from 'fifela ge[wea]ld' (10). Yet the popularity of this figure, who might be the Vidigoia that Jordanes calls the 'bravest of the Goths, [who] perished by the guile of the Sarmatians' (§ 178) and lists (§ 43) among those 'whose fame among them [the Goths] is great; such heroes as admiring antiquity scarce proclaims its own to be',[1] has subsequently waned to such an extent that there is no standard English form of his name for the use of present-day scholars -- a melancholy reflection.

Again, Norse analogues for the story in *Þiðreks saga* are lacking, nor is there any indication that Scandinavian and English tradition of the character had anything in common. The Faroese and Danish ballads are not of certain independent value, as they may be derived from or influenced by the saga; and even if they do show indigenous developments those are probably later in date and not reliable evidence for the mediæval forms of the stories. Nevertheless, the English, Faroese and Danish accounts must be taken into consideration.

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[1]*The Gothic History of Jordanes*, trans. by Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1915), pp. 62, 101; ed. by Theodore Mommsen, *Monumenta Germniae Historica*, Auctorum antiquissimorum, 5, part 1 (Berlin: Wiedmann), pp. 104, 65. I only mention this to point out the durability of his fame; it has no relevance for the relationship of the Scandinavian and continental traditions. To 'be' the same character here means no more than that the stories of the legendary hero are descended from those of the historical figure.

Widsith and *Waldere* both seem to refer to this character, using different forms of the name (Wudga and Widia respectively) and alluding to different events. *Waldere* calls him 'Niðhades mæg, I Welandes bearn' and says that Þeodric intended to give him a fine sword and much treasure as a reward for rescuing him from what may be translated as giants (II 4-10). It is by no means certain that the fragments represent authentic English tradition rather than a late German import (see below, 6.4). At first glance one might try making a point out of the difference in name-forms between *Waldere*'s 'Widia' and *Widsith*'s 'Wudga', as not only might the epic fragments be adapted from German but the name would be a fairly close rendering of whatever preceded the recorded Witege, just as close as the 'Viðga' of *Þiðreks saga*. That would mean that Widia and Wudga are not in fact the same figure. However, the two developments are equally plausible in English, and forms more nearly approximating 'Widia' than 'Wudga' are in fact slightly commoner in the Anglo-Saxon records; I count three against one.[2]

Widsith pairs Wudga with Hama twice in what is clearly a formulaic *b*-verse ('Wudgan ond Haman' 124, 'Wudga ond Hama' 130) and singles them out for special notice among what I will call, for want of a less contentious term, the Gothic heroes. They are in a rather anomalous position as 'wræccan þær weoldan wundnan golde I werum ond wifum' (129-30). It appears that they are rulers yet also exiles, wanderers or adventurers. No extant story quite explains such a situation, although one could regard it as in character for these two; particularly Viðga, who is governor of a city but because of his duties to both Erminrek and Þiðrek is under the wrong king whomever he serves. It is possible that 'wræccan' might here have a meaning more akin to the German 'Recken', roughly 'heroes', but it appears in no other contexts that give strong support to such an interpretation, and the later semantic development of the word towards 'wretch' tells against it while agreeing with the older meaning of 'exile, wanderer'.

A faint memory of Widia is evidently preserved in Laȝamon's *Brut*, ll. 10543-45:

> Þa dude he [Arthur] on his burne ibroide of stele,
> Þe makede on aluisc smið mid aðelen hi crafte;
> He wes ihaten Wygar, þe Witeȝe wurhte.

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[2]Searle, *Onomasticon*, pp. 466, 471, 486.

The most likely interpretation is that Witeȝe is the smith's name, transferred from the son to his father, traditionally Wayland (see above, 'Velent', 2.2). One suggestion may be that the hero's name has become not Witeȝe but Wygar, comparable to the Faroese Virgar.[3]

4.3: Scandinavian ballads

In the Faroese ballad 'Risin í Hólmgørðum' or 'Dysjadólgur' Virgar Valintsson fetches the sword Miming (or Mimring, Mimaring or Mimmaring) from the gravemound of his father (who is the 'dysjadólgur' of the alternative title) in order to fight the giant Vilkus.[4] He is accompanied by Sjúrður Sigmundarson and Nornagest and associated with the court of Hjalprek. There is no sign of the link with Theodoric consistently found in the German, Danish and Old English sources. One may perhaps draw a connection between the ballad's Vilkus and the saga's Vilkinus, based on the similarity of the name and the fact that the former is a giant and the latter a giant's father. Their respective relationships to the hero, however (mortal foe whom he slays and great-grandfather who dies before his birth), bear no resemblance to each other.

Denmark also sends Viderick Verlandsson giant-slaying, if Langbeen Riser means (as it appears to) 'Giant Long-legs'.[5] Here he is definitely one of Diderik's men, and, unusually, his mother is named. B, b knows her as Bodild and B, a as Buodell (st. 15). His father's occupation as a smith is implied in the hammer and tongs that are Viderick's emblem in 'Kong Diderik i Birtingsland' and 'Ulv van Jærn'.[6] In fact 'Ulv van Jærn' states in as many words that his father was (past tense) a smith.[7] It is unusual for Wayland to be mentioned as having died, but the tense of this remark suggests as much, agreeing with the Faroese evidence. This is highly dubious, though, as Verland might simply have retired from his occupation or passed otherwise out of

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[3]It was after drafting the above that I found the same suggestion in Rosamund Allen's translation of the *Brut* (London: Dent; Rutland: Tuttle, 1992, repr. 1993), pp. 446-47.

[4]No. 10 in *Føroya Kvæði: Corpus Carminum Færoensium*, compiled by Svend Grundtvig and Jørgen Bloch, ed. by N. Djurhus and Chr. Matras, 6 vols (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1951-72), 1 (1951-63), 311-25. The name-forms vary between the different versions of the ballad, but not materially.

[5]'Kong Diderik og hans Kæmper', no. 7 in *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, ed. by Svend Grundtvig and others (Copenhagen: Samfund til den danske Literaturs Fremme, 1853-1948), 1, ed. by Svend Grundtvig (1853). I am using the name-form in version B, b, pp. 118-21, for the giant and selecting an arbitrarily normalised form for the hero.

[6]No. 8, pp. 123-29, st. (a) 32, (b) 20; no. 10, pp. 142-58, stt. A19, C30-31, D22, E15, G43-44.

[7]St. B13, C15, D14, G22.

human ken, and the Faroese incident of the father's gravemound is a conventional way for a hero to gain a great sword, the most celebrated example being the waking of Angantýr in *Heiðreks saga ok Hervarar*. A curiously similar situation, though with quite different causes, is found in *Þiðreks saga* when Velent realises that his father has been buried under a landslide and so seeks out the sword that Vaði left for him earlier in order to kill the dwarfs before they kill him (ch. 89-90, pp. 80-81).

Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from these and other ballads[8] is an argument from silence. There is no hint of the blackening of Viderick's character found in the German sources. One cannot state an absolute rule about folk-tradition, but it would seem easier to turn a hero into a villain than vice versâ. Kay and Gawain in the Arthurian legends provide good examples of this. Accordingly, if we find that modern Danish ballads treat a character more sympathetically than mediæval German poems, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Denmark knew of the figure as a hero before his reputation suffered in the German imagination, and that the sinister Witege never became established in Danish story-telling. Hemming Larsen suggests an explanation: 'The Scandinavian ballads, as well as the Old English sources, deal only with Viðga's early life; they know him only as the noble champion.'[9]

4.4: German versions

In the German Witege we can recognise the saga's Viðga. Here is the fearsome son of Wielant, serving Ermenrîch yet in honour bound also to Dietrich, Heime's companion, slayer of princes. Yet his character is less sympathetic in the German than in the Norse source. In *Alpharts Tod*, for example, he is contrasted unfavourably with Heime, whom he persuades to aid him against Alphart.[10] Heime engages in some casuistry that Witege does not appear to feel necessary: 'sæhe ich an dem schilte den lewen oder den arn, I hêrn Dietrîches wâfen, ich wolt iuwer niht bestân' (260). Later, when they are both fighting against Alphart simultaneously, 'Witege sluoc in hinden, Heime bestuont in vor' (288). *Dietrichs Flucht*[11] shows Witege in a complex web of

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[8]No. 14, 'Memering', and no. 16, 'Greve Genselin'.
[9]'Viðga in Scandinavian hero legend', *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, 6 (1920), 75-81, p. 79.
[10]In *Deutsches Heldenbuch*, ed. by K. Müllenhoff and others, 5 vols, (Berlin: Weidmann, 1866-73), 2, ed. by Ernst Martin, pp. 1-54.
[11]Ibid. pp. 57-215.

political necessity (or, on a less charitable interpretation, opportunism -- conveniently summarised by Gillespie[12]) but gives him no excuse for his betrayal of Raben to Ermrîch (7712-13), which provokes Dietrîch's outburst 'Witege, ungetriuwer man' (7763). His first appearance in the *Rabenschlacht*[13] is a mention of 'des ungetriuwen Witegen' (364), and Diether uses the word twice in taunting the hero (388, 390). Witege insists 'Ich slahe iuch vil ungerne' (417), but Orte calls him 'mordære' (418) and, again, 'vil ungetriuwer' (427). There is one use of the adjective not in direct speech but an authorial comment, so the criticism of Witege is clearly more than the partisan emotion of his enemies:

(460) Disen grôzen smerzen
weinen dô began
mit allem sînem herzen
Witege der ungetriuwe man.

His regret for his actions is thus obvious, but he is not exculpated. Viðga, on the other hand, has not betrayed a city and so need not answer for that. The many instances of his being called 'illi hundr' (ch. 377, p. 243; ch. 379, p. 244; ch. 380, p. 247 (twice); ch. 381, p. 248) are the words of his opponents. This aspect of Witege is most fully brought out in these poems, and, as that is perhaps the most important aspect for our present purposes, I pass over the other mediæval German sources.[14]

One particularly interesting feature of divergent tradition is the manner of Witege's departure. In the *Rabenschlacht* he disappears under the waves with 'vrou Wâchilt', a mermaid. Much the same happens in the Swedish version of *Þiðreks saga*, which does not name the 'haffru' but calls her his 'fadher fadher modher' (ch. 445, p. 395). Strangely, the earlier version of the saga merely has Viðga vanish into the sea. One would have thought that if the source had the mermaid the compiler would not hesitate to use her and possibly identify her with the earlier 'siokona'. The

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[12]*Catalogue*, p. 145: 'after Ermenrîch's defeat at Meilân (Milan), Witege renews his oaths of allegiance to Dietrich, who then puts him in command at Rabene (Ravenna); Witege hands over the town to Ermenrîch after Dietrich's departure (7712 ff.); he flees once more after Ermenrîch's defeat at Bôlonje (Bologna).'

[13]*Deutsches Heldenbuch*, vol. II, pp. 219-326.

[14]*Biterolf und Dietleib*, *Das deutsche Heldenbuch*, *Ecken Auszfahrt*, *Ecken Liet*, *Laurin und der Kleine Rosengarten*, *Zwerg Laurin*, *Nibelungenlied*, *Die Gedichte vom Rosengarten zu Worms*, *Der Rosengarte*, *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*, 'Ain Vasnach spill von den Risn oder Recken', *Virginal*; listed in Gillespie, p. 145.

question therefore arises, why the disparity between the texts? It is always possible that the incident was merely omitted by a scribe in the Mb tradition, or the Swedish redactor may have had independent access to German materials. Even parallel evolution may have happened. One must hesitate to attribute the relationship between hero and mermaid to the earliest strata of the legend when one considers that one main source has the rescuer but not the ancestress and the other has the ancestress but not the rescuer. It is hardly fair to conclude, with H. R. Ellis Davidson, that 'the link between this giantess and Wade's grandson Widia, son of Weland, is a firm and independent one'.[15] Nor is the alliteration any sure sign of antiquity; it may equally be cause or effect of a later connection, in the same way as Wade is the son of Vilkinus in *Þiðreks saga* and of the king of the Vandals in *De Nugis Curialium.*

A problem of this kind highlights the difficulties of such an investigation. Arguments from silence, though often necessary, are dangerous, particularly when the evidence is as sparse and far-flung as this. Bearing that in mind, I shall attempt to draw some conclusions about the regional affinities of the legend of Viðga as contained in *Þiðreks saga.*

4.5: Conclusions

The basic incidents are mostly in agreement with the German accounts. Viðga's association with Þiðrek and Heimir is found quite consistently through most of the Germanic world, but not in the Faroes, so, as that is the only surviving Scandinavian tradition of Viðga, we must conclude that that element of the saga is distinctively imported. (The records in all these languages except English link Viðga and Sigurð, so it is possible but not verifiable that the force of attraction of Sigurð has overcome that of Þiðrek in Faroese but need not have done so in other Norse-speaking areas. Nor can the time of this change be discovered.)

The characterisation of the figure in the saga, however, is noticeably different from his portrayal in the German poems. Chambers expresses it that 'the continental Saxon versions, as translated in the *Thidreks saga*, kept his honour unimpaired.'[16] That may very well be true of the continental Saxon versions, but the saga is our only witness to them, and its fidelity is what is to be proved. Hemming Larsen states it better, that *Þiðreks saga* 'makes a conscious effort to keep

[15]'Weland the Smith', p. 151.
[16]Chambers, p. 51.

the character of Viðga clear and untainted'.[17] It is elsewhere only in High German tradition that the question of his divided loyalties arises, so it is impossible to be sure whether the integrity of Viðga is a feature of the Low German source or an alteration by a Scandinavian who knows the character in local tradition only as a giant-slayer and companion of Þiðrek, not as a traitor. By comparison of *Þiðreks saga* with the ballads we can be sure that Scandinavian folk-tradition has never known of the treachery. It tells us nothing of whether or not the original knew of it.

[17] p. 79.

Chapter 5: Heimir

5.1: Summary

Heimir has already been mentioned in connection with Viðga, and that is how he normally appears in the sources. Yet he has characteristics of his own and separate adventures which repay study. He is one of the first champions to seek out Þiðrek, and overcomes him in battle (ch. 30-33, pp. 38-43). When Viðga arrives (ch. 141-71, pp. 139-74), rivalry between the two leads to Heimir's departure from court and a brief spell as a highwayman (ch. 196-209, pp. 204-20). When Erminrik is turned against his nephew Þiðrek, Heimir and Viðga both reproach him, Viðga continuing to serve him nonetheless but Heimir leaving him and once again taking to the woods (ch. 345, pp. 169-77), until after Sifka's death, when he enters a cloister (ch. 430, p. 375-77). A battle with a giant (ch. 431-36, pp. 377-85) reveals his identity, and Þiðrek seeks him out and persuades him to return to being a champion of the king (ch. 437-39, pp. 385-87), in which capacity he dies fighting another giant (ch. 441, pp. 389-91).

5.2: German references

Two important parallels are without any hint of Viðga, and the main body of this chapter will be concerned with them, but first the German texts must be discussed in comparison with *Þiðreks saga*.[1] These poems have little to add to the saga. In the previous chapter (p. 4) the contrasting presentation of Witege and Heime in *Alpharts Tod* has been examined. The saga's 'ec sa þic þat niðings verc gera þa er ec var navðstaddr þa er við riðom tveir til hinna .v. alravstra hermanna oc bavttv mic fram en þv sazt a hesti þinvm vel við bvinn oc vildir eigi dvga mer ne nær coma' (ch. 196, p. 204) may confirm Witege's reproach of Heime: 'swâ ich in herten stürmen mit den vînden umbe gie, I dâ phlæge dû ie suone' (*Alpharts Tod* 261). But one important distinction must be drawn. In Germany Heime is consistently presented as joining in the battle against Dietrich alongside Witege, whereas Heimir in *Þiðreks saga* takes no part, simply dropping out of society for the whole period of these hostilities.

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[1] *Alpharts Tod*, *Anhang des Heldenbuches*, *Biterolf und Dietleib*, *Dietrichs Flucht*, *Die Gedichte vom Rosengarten zu Worms*, *Der Rosengarte*, *Die Rabenschlacht*, *Virginal* and *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*; listed in Gillespie, p. 64.

5.3: Old English allusions

5.3.1: *Widsith*

A tentative explanation for the expression 'wræccan þær weoldan wundnan golde I werum ond wifum' (*Wid* 129-30) has already been advanced, based on the continental characterisation of Viðga 'who is governor of a city but because of his duties to both Erminrek and Þiðrek is under the wrong king whomever he serves' (above, 4.2), and a completely different explanation is possible with regard to Heimir. In *Þiðreks saga* Heimir Studasson twice spends time as an outlaw (ch. 197-209, pp. 205-20; ch. 345-430, pp. 177-375) and then is linked with 'gull ok silfur' (ch. 430, p. 377). Admittedly he is not shown as ruling men and women in either context, although it could be argued that the mere presence of his riches is a major influence on the monastic community. A more likely situation is that where in *Þiðreks saga* the treasure is only mentioned at the end of the period of living as an outlaw, in *Widsith* a clear connection is made between the lawlessness and the money. However, *Widsith* gives too little evidence of the English tradition for us to draw any firm conclusions, and the hint of a community governed by Wudga and Hama must remain simply that. It is odd that the two men should be listed together in *Widsith* in a context that other sources can only explain for each individual separately.

5.3.2: *Beowulf*

> 'Nænigne ic under swegle selran hyrde
> hordmaðum hæleþa, syþðan Hama ætwæg
> to þære byrhtan byrig Brosinga mene,
> sigle ond sincfæt,-- searoniðas fleah
> Eormenrices, geceas ecne ræd.'

That famous allusion in *Beowulf* 1197-1201 is a cause of great controversy. Some see it as a version of Heimir's sojourn in the cloister, others consider it a euhemerised survival of the legend of Heimdall and the Brísingamen. First it must be noted that the poet claims to have heard of no better treasure under the sky, not simply other than the 'Brosinga mene' but since Hama took it 'to þære byrhtan byrig'. That may imply that this action removed it from competition, and that it was either destroyed there or ceased to be 'under swegle'. Then again, it could easily be a

metonymy, signifying the object's entire history by means of an allusion to one noteworthy incident.

Hama's fleeing 'to þære byrhtan byrig' seems to be in apposition to 'geceas ecne ræd', so the two phrases should be considered together when attempting to interpret them. 'The expression "Godes leoht geceas" in 2469, which clearly means "he died," has suggested to some that here in 1201 we have the same meaning:'[2] but, as Wrenn also points out, in 1759-60 Hrothgar advises Beowulf to choose 'ece rædas', and he would hardly be recommending that the young hero die.

5.4: French parallel

Mention should be made of the *moniage* of Vilhjálm korneis in *Karlamagnús saga*.[3] Here, just as in *Þiðreks saga*, the great warrior departs from his king's service and enters a monastery, but he is unable to keep his fighting prowess from giving the game away and the king comes looking for him in an effort to win him back. Charlemagne is rather less successful in this than Þiðrek, but both of them use the technique of alluding to shared exploits in an effort to pierce the obscurity of the monk's cowl. No direct connection between the two tales need be suggested; both could go back independently to a common ancestor. It is, nevertheless, worth remembering that *Karlamagnús saga* and *Þiðreks saga* originate in the same *milieu*, so it is possible that knowledge of one influenced the other. French analogues of the Vilhjálm story are well-attested -- the *Moniage Guillaume*, which exists in two versions.[4] To support Heimir's seclusion in the monastery there is only the doubtful evidence of the *Beowulf* allusion discussed above. If we must choose one saga's account as having priority over the other, then *Karlamagnús saga* would appear the clear favourite. But, as I have indicated, neither need be considered more authentic than the other.

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[2]*Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, ed. by C. L. Wrenn, 2nd edn (London: Harrap, 1958, repr. 1969), pp.208-09.

[3]*Karlamagnús saga ok kappa hans*, ed. by C. R. Unger (Christiania: Jensen, 1860); *Karlamagnús saga: The Saga of Charlemagne and his Heroes*, trans. by Constance B. Hieatt, 3 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975-80).

[4]*Les deux rédactions en vers du Moniage Guillaume*, ed. by Wilhelm Cloetta, 2 vols (Paris: SATF, 1906-11); cited by Hieatt, vol. 3, p. 291.

5.5: Scandinavian link

The remaining parallel is the curious case of Heimir Áslaugsfostri in *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*. This character would seem at first to have little in common with Heimir Studasson but their name, yet close comparative study of them reveals a number of verbal and structural links.[5] Rory McTurk's survey makes it seem probable that the two portrayals are related, but a closer examination of his arguments will be necessary to judge their force and, if true, in which way the influence is likely to have gone. In my discussion below I shall distinguish the characters in *Þiðreks saga* and *Ragnars saga* by affixing '(*Þ*)' and '(*R*)' to the respective Heimirs.

Little time need be spent on the fact that Heimir (*R*) appears immediately after the death of Jǫrmunrek whereas much attention is paid to the enmity between Heimir (*Þ*) and Erminrek. Jǫrmunrek and Erminrek may be reflexes of the same historico-legendary figure, but these two tales of them have very little else in common (see below, 'Erminrek'), nor is anything made of the juxtaposition of Heimir (*R*) and Jǫrmunrek. McTurk thinks that the presence of an important figure called Áki in each Heimir's story 'may be significant'; but, as he also points out, 'Heimir Studasson's attitude to Áki Ákason, whom his uncle Erminrikr has caused to be hanged, is, if anything, sympathetic (see Bertelsen II, 176), whereas Heimir of Hlymdalir has little reason to feel sympathetic to the Áki of *Ragnars saga* who, though at first reluctant to do so, eventually agrees to murder him.'[6]

McTurk isolates four main similarities between the two narratives: (1) the gold and silver with which each Heimir disappears; (2) the earthquakes caused by the death of Heimir (*R*) and by the slaying of a giant at the hands of Heimir (*Þ*); (3) the long hoods worn by Áslaug, by two warriors in *Ragnars saga* (see next item) and by the disguised Heimir (*Þ*); and (4) the recognition through recounting past exploits of two warriors at a funeral feast in *Ragnars saga* and the similar method used by Þiðrek to establish the identity of Heimir (*Þ*). Gold and silver are hardly so rare in tales of heroic deeds as to form a diagnostic for influence of one story on another, so likeness (1) can hardly be more than supporting evidence if the other items prove independently telling.

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[5]See Rory McTurk, 'The Relationship of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* to *Þiðriks saga af Bern*', in *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977*, ed. by Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson (Reykjavik: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1977), II, 568-85.
[6]p. 579 and n. 94.

Earthquakes are less common, so that could be a valid index. I have been unable to locate another earthquake in *Vǫlsunga saga* or *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and the only other one in *Þiðreks saga* appears to be that in which Vaði dies. That may suggest that quakes are more germane to *Þiðreks saga* than to *Ragnars saga* and so *Þiðreks saga* is more likely to have been the donor than the recipient, but the evidence is not weighted very strongly. One could use the same argument to show that long hoods are more at home in *Ragnars saga* than in *Þiðreks saga*, therefore the borrowing would have gone the other way. Yet Áslaug's hood has little in common with those of the other instances, so their importance is reduced to mere aspects of the recognition scene. They are a fairly obvious mechanism for necessitating such a scene, and external motivation is clearer in *Þiðreks saga*, where the hero is a cowled monk, than in *Ragnars saga*.

The closer we look at the evidence for a relationship between these two figures, then, the more slender it appears. Such as it is, it would seem to indicate that Heimir (*R*) owes his shared characteristics to Heimir (*Þ*) rather than the other way around. That being the case, we can rule out any adaptation of the character in *Þiðreks saga* to consort with the tradition of his namesake in Scandinavia.

5.6: Conclusions

The portrayal of Heimir as a character is interesting. He starts off as the greatest of champions, overcoming the redoubtable Þiðrek, but at the end of their career the position is reversed and Þiðrek manages to slay Heimir's bane. A similar development is seen with regard to Viðga as he retreats before the king's onslaught rather than fight against his former lord and friend, so Þiðrek could be seen as winning in that final encounter. But Heimir is diminished not only in relation to Þiðrek but relative to the other champions. Viðga takes his place as foremost retainer and also besmirches his honour (ch. 196, p. 204, quoted above). His ignominious flight from Þettleif and chastened return to Bern (ch. 209, p. 220) turn him into a figure of fun. It is arguable that he takes his colouring from those that surround him: a foil to the always more heroic Viðga; comical among the humorous exploits of Þettleif; and in the gathering gloom of the saga's closing chapters his death is told, despite the conventional extravagance of fights in this romantic heroic tradition, with sombre simplicity: 'Risinn [...] reidir hana vpp og lystur Heimer suo mikit

hid fyrsta høgg ath hann flygur suo lángt og snart sem kólfur af boga og fyrr er hann davþur enn hann kiæmi aa jørdina. þad er nv sagt fra bana Heimirs. werdur þetta nv frægt er suo mikill kappi hefer nv lated sitt líf (ch. 441, pp. 390-91).

Chapter 6: Valtari

6.1: Summary

Valtari af Vaskasteini first appears in *Þiðreks saga* challenging the interloper Þéttleif to a contest of prowess, wagering his head on the outcome and having to be redeemed by his uncle Erminrek (ch. 228-31, pp. 245-48). He meets his end at the hands of Vildifer while fighting for Erminrek against Þiðrek's army (ch. 376, pp. 241-42). But it is with an incident in which Erminrek does not figure that we are concerned, because this brief story -- scarcely four pages long in the editions of Bertelsen and of Guðni Jónsson, who entitles it a separate 'Þáttr af Valtara ok Hildigunni' -- captures the imagination of tale-tellers as far apart as England, Poland and Piedmont, and thus gives us widespread variants of the legend to compare. In the saga's version (ch. 336, pp. 105-09), Valtari and Hildigunn are hostages at Attila's court, lovers who run away together with gold from the treasury. Attila bids twelve men pursue them; Valtari slays eleven and then puts out the eye of Hǫgni, the last survivor, whereupon they part, Hǫgni fleeing to Attila, and Valtari and Hildigunn to Erminrek.

6.2: German versions

This story-pattern is characterised by Peter Dronke as the 'single-escape version', as opposed to the 'twofold ordeal' found in some other sources.[1] Such a source is the fullest and best-known account of the Walter legend, the mediæval Latin epic *Waltharius*. Its origin is a fruitful field of scholarly debate -- in the words of F. Norman, 'there seems little chance that the Latinists will arrive at a reasonably agreed opinion'.[2] Where Latinists are at odds let a Germanicist not seek to pronounce; but one can say with reasonable confidence that the poem is from Germany or Austria and that it predates *Þiðreks saga*, which is sufficient for the present purpose.[3] In this work the lovers are not pursued by Attila's men, but are set upon *en route* by Guntharius, through

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[1]Peter Dronke, 'Waltharius-Gaiferos', in Ursula & Peter Dronke, *Barbara et antiquissima carmina*, Publicaciones del Seminario de literatura medieval y humanística (Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1977), pp. 27-79; p. 33.

[2]Frederick Norman, 'The Evidence for the Germanic Walter Lay', *Acta Germanica*, 3 (1968) 21-35 (p. 31).

[3]Dronke conveniently examines recent discussion up to 1975 on pp. 66-79 of 'Waltharius-Gaiferos', in an appendix on 'The date and provenance of "Waltharius"'. *Waltharius of Gaeraldus*, ed. by A. K. Bate (Reading: Department of Classics, University of Reading, 1978) contains a later examination of the problem.

whose territory they are passing and who lays claim to the treasure that they are carrying away with them. Again Waltharius despatches eleven foes and then meets his match in Hagano, whom he knew while they were both hostages at Attila's court, but this time the encounter ends in a reconciliation scene and the three warriors sit around laughing while Hiltgunt tends their wounds.

There are references to Walther and his escape in other German texts. In the *Nibelungenlied* Etzel mentions the permitted departure of Hagen and the escape of Walther 'von Spânje' with Hildegunt (1756); the prowess of Hagen and his (unnamed) companion in arms 'von Spânje' is recollected (1797); and Hildebrant asks Hagen:

> 'nu wer wás, der ûf einem schilde vor dem Wáskensteine saz,
> dô im von Spânje Walther sô vil der friunde sluoc?
> ouch habt ir noch ze zeigen an iu sélbén genuoc' (2344).

Most of the other mentions simply place Walther among the champions of Etzel, Dietrich or Ermenrich and do not add to our knowledge of his own story; he seems merely a handy figure to slot into whatever other tale is being told.[4] He appears as king of Spain and other countries in *Biterolf und Dietleib*, whose titular hero, his nephew Biterolf, may indeed have adventures reminiscent of Walther's, but it hardly seems fair to say with F. Norman that 'For the first seven sections of the epic [sc. *Biterolf und Dietleib*], i.e. up to line 4740, *Walther* was the first source and model',[5] considering that only two fragments of the putative *Walther* epic survive. Nor is it necessarily safe to conclude, as Dronke does, that *Walther* 'told the story of the single escape'.[6] We do know that Walther has slain many Huns, and that he is escorted through Gunther's land by

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[4]*Alpharts Tod*, 77, 307, 317, 334, 356, 372-73, 380, 400, 426, 434, 448; *Anhang des Heldenbuches*, p. 2; *Biterolf und Dietleib*, 575-808, 2104-08, 3038-42, 5082-98, 6219-306, 6423-34, 6774-77, 7644-68, 8435-41, 8770-79, 8958-60, 9075-82, 957696, 9904-92, 10112-32, 10396-494, 10780-83, 11001-42, 11686-707, 11922-38, 12200-06, 12285-87, 12647-58, 12801-17, 12998-13000; *Dietrichs Flucht*, 5902, 7360, 8596, 8638, 9244, 9870; Die Gedichte vom Rosengarten zu Worms A, 8, 3, D, 44, 4, and F, IV. 2, 1; Der Rosengarte, 32-33, 235-36, 407-14, 1402-57; 'Der Rosengarte', 65-66, 290-93, 625-48; 'Ain Vasnach spill von den Risn oder der Reckhn', 328; Die Rabenschlacht, 47-48, 551-54, 712; listed in Gillespie, *Catalogue*, p. 136. Many of the passages are conveniently assembled in Marion Dexter Learned, 'The Saga of Walther of Aquitaine', *PMLA*, 7 (1892), iii-v, 1-208, along with the Old English, Latin and Polish versions, although in unreliable editions.

[5]*Waldere*, ed. by F. Norman, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1933), p. 10.

[6]p. 33.

Volker for fear of Ortwin and reaches home safely to prepare for his wedding. The elaborate reconstruction of the plot of *Walther* by H. Schneider begs many questions, and, while it may suggest useful areas of investigation, it has no status as evidence for the form of the story current in Germany.[7]

6.3: Other elements

Indeed, one important incident in Schneider's account is derived purely from a Polish chronicle, that of Boguphalus from the late fourteenth century, and lifts the capture of an enemy by Walter from after his marriage to before the escape, nor does it make the same use of it as in the original. Boguphalus shows his hero taking a prince prisoner and then has the prince commit adultery with Helgunda; Schneider removes the adultery and makes the capture an early exploit of Walther's, based on a similar feat of Biterolf's in *Biterolf und Dietleib*. The only argument against question-begging appears to be that Helgunda's lover (whom Walterus slays) is called Wislaus (Pol. Wislaw) and in *Þiðreks saga* Valtari is slain by Vildifer, who has earlier gone by the name of Vizleo while disguised as a bear (ch. 249, p. 265). I confess myself unconvinced by the closeness of the parallel.

It should be noted that there is little widespread agreement about the course of events after the couple arrive safely at Walter's home. According to *Waltharius* he reigns over his people for thirty years, with only the conventional subsequent triumphs of a successful king, but the Novalician chronicle that quotes the poem (see below) has the hero end up a monk, with a colourful later adventure. Only the Poles record the breakdown of his marriage, and the death of Valtari in combat with Vildifer is unique to *Þiðreks saga*. It is safe to say that the ancestral story of Walter may have referred to later deeds, but its interest was only in the elopement story, and later tellers were free to deal with events afterwards as they saw fit and as was useful. It is typical that the Vienna fragment of *Walther* ends with a prediction of his later prowess, whereas his rôle in the other German narratives where he appears may be summarised as 'Walther's exploits in this epic'. This was a handy hero with a rise but no fall, who could be used wherever a champion was needed.

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[7]Hermann Schneider, 'Das Epos von Walther und Hildegunde', *GRM*, 13 (1925), 14-32 and 119-30.

The basic tale of the elopement which is nearly thwarted but for the strength of Walter's arm remains in the Polish account, although the details are quite different from the Germanic versions. Here Helgunda is betrothed to a German prince but runs away with Walterus, and the jilted suitor is the sole opponent of the hero. Another Latin chronicle gives the only full account yet to be considered. It is from the monastery of Novalese in Piedmont and cites largely from *Waltharius*, but breaks off before the end of the conflict with Cundharius (sic) and Hagano. The hero is identified with a local saint, and retires to the monastery in later life. In a fight against robbers he uses a calf's shoulder as a weapon, a picturesque touch which, as Dronke points out, is without realistic justification, and which he connects with the thigh-bone of a wild boar which Valtari throws at Hagen, putting out his eye (*Ps*, ch. 336, p. 109).[8] A more significant link is with the story of *Moniage Guillaume*, which occurs translated into Norse in *Karlamagnús saga* (see above, 5.4). There the martial hero has retired to a monastery and is attacked by robbers. He defends himself with a leg that he tears off a beast of burden (a horse in French, a mule in Norse) and then after his victory he prays that the limb be restored to the animal, and God grants the miracle. Obviously a version of the same story has attached itself to the monk of Novala, and there is no particular reason to suppose that the bone in one tale of Walter depends on the other.

6.4: Waldere

There also exist two fragments of a supposed epic on Walter in Old English. The length of the complete work is debatable: W. P. Ker is the *locus classicus* of what is probably the prevailing view, namely that 'If the author kept the same proportion throughout, his poem may have been almost as long as *Waltharius*';[9] but Dronke, for example, stresses the 'if' and points out that the whole of the action preceding the fight during which the action of our fragments seems to take place could have been summed up in a speech of a dozen lines. What we have is a pair of 30-odd line pages in which nothing happens; but the speeches that are preserved indicate sufficient of the nature of the story to enable scholars to construct a narrative framework and detailed characterisation for it with a confidence not entirely justified by the text.

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[8]p. 49.

[9]*Epic and Romance*, p. 88.

The actual contents of the two fragments are summarised with exemplary caution by Norman: 'In one fragment somebody encourages Waldere to continue the fight; in the other, somebody praises a sword, Waldere praises his armour and eggs on Guðhere.'[10] The speaker in the first fragment is generally thought to be Hildegyth, as all the other people present at the fight in those sources that tell of it are opposed to Walter. The unlikelihood of a woman having witnessed Waldere's deeds in battle is not a problem if we suppose that, as he is now fighting against Guthhere himself (ll. 25 ff.), he has already disposed of his henchmen. We are justified in interpreting the passage as dealing with the Walter legend not only by association with the accompanying folio, which is a little more explicit and matches the first one closely, but also because details in this section agree independently with the *Waltharius*. The hero's father is Alphere in the Latin, Ælfhere in the OE (fragment II, l. 18, shows him with 'Ælfheres laf'), and the description 'Ætlan ordwyga' (I, 6) fits Waltharius. Add the antagonist Guthhere/Guntharius, and the only significant contrast with the Latin epyllion appears to be the bolder character of Hildegyth, if she is urging her champion to stand fast: 'certainly a different person from the Hiltgunt of the Latin poet whose heart [presumably Hiltgunt's, not, despite grammar, the poet's] beats in fear when the wind rustles in the leaves, and who exhorts her companion to flee.'[11] Fragment II offers corroborating evidence with such terms as 'Waldere' (l. 11), 'wine Burgenda' (14) and 'Hagenan hand' (15), but despite the tantalising glimpse of a tale of Widia and Theodric (4-10) the only other information about the form of this story is the evidently vain expectation that Hagena would fight against Waldere (identical with the situation in *Waltharius*), and the reference to a second sword possessed by Waldere (likewise parallelled in *Waltharius*).

The trouble is, the certain correspondences with the Latin poem have led commentators to discern correspondences that are less certain. Most noticeably, I have never seen any scepticism expressed about the identity of the object referred to in the opening speech of Fragment II.* It is probable that 'maðma' is a variation on 'sinc' and 'ði mece' refers back to 'hit', but other interpretations are possible. The universally accepted conclusion that the speaker is talking about a sword may be based primarily on a desire to see a picturesque feature of the Latin poem

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[10]p. 7.

[11]Norman, edn, pp. 19-20, citing *Waltharius* 351-53 and 1213.

* 'Ic wat þæt hit ðohte [...] | [...] 7 eac sinc micel | maðma mid ði mece' (ll. 4-6).

also in the English one. Much debate has ensued about whether or not this is Waldere's second sword, but it merely involves giving the sword to various characters -- each of the four has been credited with the speech by somebody or other, and Norman, for example, makes out persuasive cases for all of them in succession.[12] Yet given the amount of treasure with which the fugitives are laden, judging from both *Waltharius* and *Þiðreks saga*, something completely different could be under discussion. Perhaps Waldere's ensuing speech is cutting across a suggestion that he and Hildegyth buy off their attackers.

Again, it is generally thought that the scene of the fragments is the second fight, with the Burgundians acting in their own interests, as is the case in *Waltharius*. But, bearing in mind the fact that *Þiðreks saga* has Hǫgni (though not Gunnar) pursuing the lovers as an agent of Attila's, and we have no evidence for the earlier course of events in the English version, it is possible that this is a 'single-escape' rather than a 'twofold ordeal' pattern. I would not press the idea very strongly, but I am tempted to read 'hlafurd secan' (I, 30) with 'hlafurd' in the accusative, parallel to 'ealdne eðel', with the subject an implied 'he', and interpret the lord as Ætla. That parsing would at least remove some of the passage's problems -- the awkwardness of the construction and the feeling that 'It is certainly odd that Hildegyð should refer to Guðhere as *hlafurd*'[13] -- if only to raise new ones. Finally, Hildegyth's name is nowhere recorded, and it is not definite that she is the speaker in Fragment I. Admittedly, no other character is as probable, but if, for example, Hagena is speaking -- not only unwilling to fight his old friend but positively cheering him on -- that gets rid of the difficulty Norman finds in having Hildegyth call Guthhere 'hlafurd'.

The English provenance of the *Waldere* fragments is not by itself certain evidence for their preserving native English tradition. If the Anglo-Saxons could translate *Genesis B* from Old Saxon and riddles from Latin, they were quite capable of Englishing a continental epic on this theme. It is certainly not a translation of *Waltharius*, and probably not based on it, as in the sixty-odd surviving lines we find an allusion of which there is not one trace in the Latin poem, namely Theodric and Widia. That may be an attempt by an English redactor to reconcile two conflicting

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[12]'The OE *Waldere* and Some Problems in the Story of Walther and Hildegunde', in *Mélanges pour Jean Fourquet*, ed. by Valentin and Zink (Paris, 1969), pp. 261-71 (pp. 267-70).
[13]Norman, edn, note, p. 39.

stories handed down from different sources, but as *Waltharius* makes no mention of Mimming either any contradiction must have derived from elsewhere. It is possible to speculate endlessly about the possibilty that *Waldere* is a translation of a German poem, perhaps the original of the Latin, but there is no firm evidence either way. The other heroic records make no reference to this story as distinct from any others associated with the same cycle, but neither is Beowulf alluded to outside *Beowulf*. The personal names show no signs of being distinctively foreign. Interestingly, there is an eighth-century glut of Wealdheres, according to Searle, who lists thirteen mentions under that head-form.[14] One is the Waldere of these fragments, another is in a place-name, and the tenth-century Waltere might be better grouped with the tenth- and eleventh-century Walters on p. 477. There is an isolated ninth-century Wealdhere, and of the remaining nine the earliest is dated 692 and the latest 765. Some of the attestations may be of the same man, but nonetheless the name does seem to have become more popular in this seventy-year span than at any other time before the upsurge of Norman influence. It is interesting to observe that Norman suggests (on what grounds he does not specify) that 'Knowledge of the *Walter*-lay travelled to England during the seventh century', although he considers the earliest possible date for the writing of the putative *Waldere* epic to be the middle of the eighth century.[15] However, despite the likelihood that the name became popular due to a newly-imported Walter-story, the origin of the fragments remains an entry on the list of things we cannot know for sure about them.

6.5: Þiðreks saga

These reservations may seem rather footling and distant from the question of whether or not the 'Þáttr af Valtara ok Hildigunni' has been altered from its original, but they are valuable. Not only is the above an exercise in caution against assuming relationships that are not unambiguously supported by the text, it also avoids giving the pattern of the *Waltharius* uniquely canonical status. A *Waldere* that supports *Waltharius* at every point must give a quite different impression of other versions of the legend from a *Waldere* that matches some particulars of the Latin epic but also contains significant differences. This is particularly relevant because the saga's account is just such a mixture of like and unlike elements. Valtari fights and slays eleven

[14]*Onomasticon*, p. 479.
[15]Edn, pp. 34, 23.

opponents and meets his match in Hǫgni, whose eye he puts out, as does Waltharius, although Valtari's method is more reminiscent of the bone with which the saint of the Novalese chronicle sees off the robbers (see above, 6. 3) than the sword used by the epic's hero. The saga's 'glaðil' may be a memory of the famous short sword of Waltharius, but that cannot be extrapolated from the Norse text alone. Unlike the Latin, the pursuit is entirely due to Attila, whom Hǫgni is still serving, and does not involve Gunnar. Yet the conversation between Walter and Hildegund runs parallel in both texts, with the lady at first thinking that her betrothed is mocking her, and then being convinced and agreeing to elope with him -- surely an indication of a common source. The general structure of a story is, I should think, more stable and easier to transmit by diffuse tradition than are turns of dialogue, unless the dialogue is intensely dramatic and vital to the plot; which I would argue is not the case in this instance.

It seems then reasonable to assume a German poem as the common ancestor of at least the *Þiðreks saga* episode and *Waltharius*. The bone in the *moniage* battle of the Novalese Waltharius suggests, albeit very tentatively, a continental tradition matching that of the saga, alongside the relatively conventional weaponry of the epic. One might even propose the idea that the celebrated second sword is in fact an alteration made to dignify the matter for epic treatment. Of course there is little support for this, and the fact that the introduction of the autonomous Burgundian expedition could equally be considered an innovation of the Latin poet's (because in the English remains it could be an expedition of Burgundians at Hunnish instigation, and the Middle High German references do not make it any clearer) except that there is no evident motivation for it -- such a reflection should remind us how little we know about the forebears of our surviving texts and how and why they may differ.

6.6: Remaining aspects

I have paid little attention to the Polish accounts of the legend, because they are clearly transposed into a quite different ethos, with no place for Attila's court nor the combat of one against twelve. They agree with each other, as analysed by M. D. Learned[16], sufficiently to be regarded as a single version quite distinct from the western treatments. The basic elements remain

[16]'The Saga of Walther of Aquitaine', 131-54.

-- the elopement interrupted by combat -- but it is not close enough to be useful evidence for *Þiðreks saga*. Learned identifies three groupings of 'Ethnical elements': the 'Alemannic Version'; the 'Old Norse Version'; and the 'Polish Version'.[17] I would leave the Polish version on one side and postulate not a simple bifurcation of Germanic tradition but a continuum, with the incomplete accounts, English and German, coming in between *Waltharius* and *Þiðreks saga*, and the Novalese Chronicle embracing aspects of both versions. The fact that Piedmont lies south of the German-speaking area and Saxony in the north of it should lead us to doubt the validity of merely geographical arguments (although admittedly they are both relatively western, so that *Waltharius* could have been composed on the eastern side of an east-west divide; but St. Gall, its traditional home, lies more or less directly between Piedmont and Saxony).

This has been very much a chapter of doubt and caution, shedding little if any light on the question of the episode in *Þiðreks saga*. At least it may have undermined the widespread impression that the story as given in the *Waltharius* is the norm, against which Valtari's escape must be judged. I hope, additionally, to have brought out some new ways of looking at the spread of the legend as a whole; and as that is the purpose of examining the legends in *Þiðreks saga af Bern* in the first place, the exercise may be considered fruitful.

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[17] *Ib.*, 155-56.

Chapter 7: Child Sigurð

7.1: Introduction

It is useful to deal separately with the accounts given in *Þiðreks saga* of Sigurð and of the Niflungs. It is difficult to be sure exactly where to draw the dividing line between the two sections of the narrative; certainly the exploits of young Sigurð and the fall of the Niflungs are quite distinct, but Sigurð's ill-fated marriage and death occupy a transitional position between them. Probably the most satisfactory arrangement is to deal with the Niflung intrigues as a unit, considering the murder and vengeance together, but to treat of certain significant elements in the portrayal of Sigurð in a discrete chapter. I have taken it upon myself to translate his title of 'svein' as 'Child', because I feel that that approximates the meaning of the term and that it does no harm to conjure up associations with our own ballad traditions.

7.2: First appearance

The first that we hear of Sigurð in *Þiðreks saga* is a mention in the story of Velent, who is apprenticed to Mímir but taken away again because Sigurð is too rough (ch. 84, p. 74). That is consistent with what is told of Sigurð in his own legend (ch. 269, pp. 305-06), but the timing is a little improbable. After all, Sigurð and Viðga are treated as contemporaries, but here Sigurð is a boy at the same time as Viðga's father. However, heroes can be young for remarkable lengths of time; A. T. Hatto calculates that in the *Nibelungenlied* 'Giselher retains the description of "boy" or "youth" for thirty-six years'.[1] Another possible inconsistency between the two sections is that Sigmund marries the daughter of King Niðung of Spain, a realm thereupon divided between Sigmund and Niðung's son Ortvang (ch. 262-63, pp. 282-86), while Velent also marries a King Niðung's daughter, only this king is of Jutland and is succeeded by his son Otvin, who rules the entire realm (ch. 92-135, pp. 83-131). The name Niðung is rare enough for this to be noteworthy, although it should be remembered that Bertelsen lists 'Niðungr' as an error for Nauðung and 'Niðungur' as 'søn af foregående' (II, p. 408). I can find no analogue for the name 'Niðung' in

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[1]*The Nibelungenlied*, transl. by A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; rev. 1969; repr. 1988), p. 301.

Gillespie, who does give 'Nuodunc' and compares 'Nauðung'.[2] It is reasonable to suspect that these may be two contradictory traditions about originally the same king, especially given the connection of his daughter's wooer with Mímir. Each account of the character is entirely self-consistent, so it looks as though, if the two Niðungs are originally one and the same, the traditions have diverged before reaching the sagaman. Otherwise we might have expected a less skilful and complete differentiation.

It appears, then, that the sagaman has taken two distinct episodes and used them both, so widely separated that neither reader nor writer is likely to be greatly troubled by possible incompatibility. It is impossible to tell whether this was due to laziness or oversight, although one suspects the latter.

I shall now give the salient features of Sigurð's biography according to *Þiðreks saga* and then try to establish if his life is treated self-consistently in the German and Scandinavian traditions. Anglo-Saxon evidence will also be taken into consideration. It is convenient to divide the material into the three sections called by Guðni 'Upphaf Sigurðar sveins', 'Kvánfang Sigurðar ok Gunnars' and 'Dráp Sigurðar sveins', with an additional section between 'Upphaf' and 'Kvánfang' treating of his deeds as a young knight.[3] I shall refer to the four sections as 'Sigurð's origins', 'Sigurð's chivalry', 'the bridal quest' and 'Sigurð's death'.

7.3: Sigurð's origins

7.3.1: Summary

The account of Sigurð's birth and upbringing, through the dragon-fight till the hero's parting from Brynhild, is contained in ch. 262-73, pp. 282-319. He is the son of Sigmund, king of Tarlungaland, and his wife Sisibe. Sisibe has been accused of adultery by two nobles, so Sigmund has sent her out into the woods to be punished by them. While they are arguing she gives birth to

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[2]*Catalogue*, p. 99. Under 'Sigelint (1)' he does mention Sisibe daughter of Niðung and compares Sigelint (3), the daughter of Nîtgêr (2) in the *Klage* (p. 124, n. 10); but neither the names nor the rôles are persuasively similar.

[3]Ms A puts the title 'Frá Sigurdi Fafnisbana' before ch. 262 (p. 282); Mb has 'kua*n*fa*n*g þei*r*a Sigurðar oc Gu*n*nars' before ch. 319 (p. 37); and ch. 387 is preceded in Mb by 'hær hæfr vpp sagu Niflunga oc fra vidskiptu*m* þæi*r*a Sigurðar svæins oc haugna oc gunnars ko*nun*gs oc af bardaganom i susat. oc hve*r*so grimilldr hæf*n*di sin*n*ar osæmðar er hen*n*i var gor at saclauso i fyrstun*n*i oc hæfr hær vpp capitula' and in A by 'Her hefur vpp þaatt' (p. 258).

a son and places him in a glass vessel, which is kicked into the river in the confusion and floats away. Sisibe then dies and is posthumously acquitted. Meanwhile the infant is found and suckled by a hind until he is twelve months old and bigger and stronger than any other child would be at four years. Then along comes Mímir the smith who has been trying for nine years to have a child with his wife. He brings up the boy and gives him the name Sigfrœð.[4] The boy's precocious strength makes him a nuisance and he bullies Mímir's other apprentices to such an extent that the smith sends him off to the woods to be killed by a great worm. Sigurð, however, slays the worm with a branch from his campfire and then beheads it with an axe. He cooks it and burns his finger on the hot flesh; sticking the finger in his mouth to cool it he finds himself able to understand the speech of the birds, who comment that the worm was Regin, Mímir's brother, and the smith is liable to avenge him. Then, finding that the blood leaves his skin horny where it has touched, Sigurð splashes it all over but is unable to reach between his shoulders. He brings home Regin's head, and Mímir attempts to pacify him with gifts, including the horse Grani and the sword Gram. Accepting the latter, Sigurð follows the birds' recommendation by slaying Mímir with it and goes off to collect Grani from Brynhild's stud. He batters his way into her stronghold; she treats with him graciously and lets him take the horse; he rides off at once to Bertangaland.

7.3.2: Comparison

The poles between which this story is to be placed may be epitomised as *Vǫlsunga saga* on the one hand and on the other the *Nibelungenlied*. Those two are conventionally taken as the archetypal Scandinavian and German versions of the legend, although the saga at least appears to be by no means an entirely indigenous work. I mention below the famous borrowing by its compiler of an entire chapter from *Þiðreks saga*, so it is wise to be wary of simply assuming that this and the related material in Norse represent a thoroughly native tradition against which to measure *Þiðreks saga*. It seems, however, fair to suggest that the German elements found in these texts have been thus taken into the tradition. It may even be that, if the story in the source of *Þiðreks saga* has been altered in the interests of familiarity, some originally German elements have been introduced into a legend which did not contain them before. While accepting *Vǫlsunga*

[4]This spelling is only used on pp. 305-06 in Mb and 'Sigfrœd' on p. 305 in A, so it should be noted at this first occurrence but hereafter I shall revert to the standardised form.

saga as the main repository of Scandinavian Sigurð-lore, I shall have occasion to refer to the Eddic texts, both the poems in the Codex Regius and the epitome by Snorri in his *Edda*. A more significant contrast is provided on the German side with the addition to the *Nibelungenlied* of *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*.[5]

Vǫlsunga saga and the *Nibelungenlied* agree in making Sigurð/Sivrit the son of Sigmund/Sigemunt, but in other respects they differ widely in their views of his origins. The saga allows for his separation from his father by making him a posthumous child, brought up in a foreign land with his mother, whereas the epic knows nothing about this and has him in contact with both parents until he leaves home to go courting. We are free to speculate that this may be because of the German poet's courtly tastes (or those of his source or audience), which might find orphanage and upbringing in exile a little uncouth for the hero, especially if, unlike *Parzival*, his clash with the chivalric *mores* was not to be a major theme. It is also interesting to note the *Sig-* prefix of his mother's name; Sigelint, Sigemunt's queen. That is a Vǫlsung characteristic, found also in *Signý*, sister of Sigmund and mother of Sinfjǫtli in *Vǫlsunga saga*, so it is possible that the motif of the incestuous birth may have been attached to Siegfried himself in Germany but suppressed in the *Nibelungenlied* for the same reasons of taste. We know that traditions about his birth must have been fairly fluid for such a pre-eminent hero to be treated in such contradictory ways in the different sources. *Beowulf* 884-97 credits Sigemund with the dragon-slaying that later becomes central in his son's reputation, suggesting that at this stage no son (other than Fitela, as is generally presumed) is attributed to him.[6] It is easy to postulate a situation in which the *Sig-* hero is given a fuller biography in different ways by different storytellers, with each version adopting its own variant of the name form and inventing a separate birth-story, with another variant of the name being used for his father or son. Still, we must not build too much on a single syllable; after

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[5]When referring specifically to the *Nibelungenlied* or *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* I use the leading name-forms of, respectively, the index in *Das Nibelungenlied*, ed. by Karl Bartsch, 20th edn, rev. by Helmut de Boor, Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1972), and the main text of *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, ed. by K. C. King (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1958); for more general German tradition I use the form 'Siegfried'.

[6]Klaeber, in his note on ll. 875-900, expresses uncertainty whether or not Fitela is known as Sigemund's son, but in his list of proper names he mentions the sonship without qualification, although in brackets. Wrenn's glossary does likewise, and in his introduction (pp. 55-56) he also mentions the relationship as a fact.

all, Signý's husband, Siggeir, also has a *Sig-* name, as does Sigrún, the beloved of Helgi Hundingsbane (the son of Sigmund according to both of the *Helgakviður Hundingsbana* and, following them, *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Norna-Gests þáttr*), but there is no question of either of them being related to the Vǫlsungs by blood.

The raising by the hind has been a fruitful field for commentators. For our purpose it is irrelevant whether or not it preserves a memory of the Cherusci totem and identifies Sigurd with Arminius.[7] Our concern is not diachronic but diatopic, establishing if the motif has any significance for the local affinities of *Þiðreks saga*. Possible comparisons seem to derive entirely from the Norse texts, specifically *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Guðrúnarkviða II*. The saga relates a dream of Guðrún's featuring a hart, which Brynhild interprets as meaning Sigurð (ch. 27, p. 63); and in the poem Guðrún compares Sigurð's preeminence over her brothers to that of 'hiǫrtr hábeinn um hvǫssom dýrom' (*Gðr II*, 2). Additionally, the saga follows *Fáfnismál* in having Sigurð call himself 'gaufugt dýr' in response to Fáfnir's questioning (ch. 18, p. 42; *Fm* 2 'Gǫfuct dýr'). That may mean 'noble beast', as both Finch and Byock translate it,[8] but there is always the possibility, remembering the hart imagery, that it here shares the meaning of the English cognate 'deer', as Zoëga suggests it can (*s.v.*). In this context it should be remembered that a suggested emendation for 'hvǫssom' in *Guðrúnarkviða II* is 'hǫsom', 'fallow'.[9] There is also Hindarfjall, the mountain on which Sigurð finds Brynhild (*Fm* 42; *Sd* prose 1; *Vs* ch. 20-21, pp. 46-47). One deer reference which may be discarded without regret, however, is the suggestion that the name of Sigurð's mother in Scandinavian tradition, Hjǫrdís, derives from *hjǫrtr*.[10] It is clearly one of the many *Hjǫr-* names, such as Hjǫrleif, Hjǫrólf and Hjǫrvarð, and de Vries cites it under *hjǫrr* without evincing any need to discuss it.[11]

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[7]Otto Höfler, *Siegfried, Arminius und die Symbolik: Mit einem historischen Anhang über die Varusschlacht* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1961), pp. 27-31.

[8]*The Saga of the Volsungs*, ed. and trans. by R. G. Finch (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 31 r; *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*, trans. by Jesse L. Byock (Berkely: University of California Press, 1990), p. 63.

[9]See the textual apparatus in *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, 4th edn, rev. by Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962), p. 224, and Beatrice La Farge and John Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992), *s.vv.* 'hvass' and 'hǫss'.

[10]Höfler, p. 58, fn. 190; mentioned in Gillespie, p. 123, n. 6.

[11]Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3rd edn. (Leiden: Brill, 1977) p. 234.

If we conclude from the above that the hind's suckling of the infant hero has no close analogues in this cycle but resembles most closely certain motifs in the Scandinavian records, the same is not true of the Mímir episode. To those whose knowledge of the German material is mostly derived from the *Nibelungenlied* this portion of the story looks unmistakably northern, but it is parallelled by a section of *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* as well as by *Vǫlsunga saga*. That saga is supported by Eddic tradition in telling that Sigurð was fostered by the dwarf smith Regin, brother of the dragon Fáfnir, although this set of sources is unanimous in stating or at least implying that this was in the context of an upbringing at the court of Hjálprek and with full knowledge of his antecedents, in contradistinction to the situation in *Þiðreks saga*. The *Lied*, perhaps oddly, agrees broadly with the Scandinavian texts. Here Seyfrid is sent away from court to a smith, where he will do less damage. He still creates havoc, though, so the smith decides to send him to be killed by a snake in the forest. Of course Seyfrid triumphs and, while burning the body of that snake and a tangle of others which happened to get in his way while he was laying about with tree-trunks, discovers that a finger with which he poked the melting mass has now gained a horny coating. He treats his whole skin in the same way, except between the shoulders where he cannot reach. Invulnerability seems to be a more German than Scandinavian motif, being used in the *Nibelungenlied* and *hürnen Seyfrid* as well as *Þiðreks saga* but having no place in *Vǫlsunga saga* or the Eddas.

Þiðreks saga and *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* differ from the other texts in emphasising Sigurd's youthful strength to a positively grotesque degree. There are close enough correspondences to make it a reasonable assumption that they take this feature from a common source and, given the close parallels between 'Niflunga saga' and the *Nibelungenlied* (see below, 'The Niflungs'), that this aspect, like so many others that are not in keeping with a courtly atmosphere, has been diminished in the *Nibelungenlied*. Significant factors in establishing the link between *Þiðreks saga* and *hürnen Seyfrid* are their unequivocal statements that the smith deliberately sent the hero simply to be killed by the worm (whereas the Scandinavian Regin's motives are much more ambiguous) and the colourful detail of what a nuisance the boy caused with his overwhelming strength:

nu gengr han*n* [Mímir] i skogin þar er æin mikill ormr er. oc sægir at þa man han æin*n* svein geua honu*m* oc biðr han drepa han*n*. (*Þs* ch. 271, pp. 308-09)

Damit so meynt der Schmide
Der wurm solt jn abthon. (*hS* st. 7)

Han beR oc brytr sveina mimis [...] En nu tekr Sigfrœðr suein enni vinstri hendi ihar hans sua fast at han fællr þægar til iarðar [...] oc dregr ækci harð æptir ser at harinu. [...] Sigurðr lystr et fyrsta hoG sua fast at steðia steinen klofnaði en steðin gengr niðr allt til hausens. (*Þs* ch. 229-70, pp. 306-08)

Das eysen schlu^{o}g er entzwey
Den Ampoß in die erdt [...]
Er schlu^{o}g den knecht und meyster
Und trieb sie wider und fu^{e}r. (*hS* st. 5)

It will be noted that the first of these *Þiðreks saga* quotations introduces the worm as if this were the first mention of it. In fact two chapters earlier we have been fully informed about the names and relationship of the smith and the dragon (ch. 268, pp. 303-04). Judging from *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* it may be that in the source there was no such account and that the sagaman has added some introductory matter from tradition to which he had other access; and then he begins again with the hypothetical 'Siegfriedlied'. His preparation is wasted, however, as he merely follows his source at the point at which the monster is introduced and does not make anything of the relationship between the brothers. He could replace the indefinite article with the definite to point out that this dragon is the one he mentioned previously, but he does not. I have no explanation for the unusual naming of the brothers, who are normally Fáfnir and Regin in Norse but here are called Regin and Mímir respectively. Mímir is elsewhere known as a giant, or at least interpreted as such, and I have elsewhere mentioned the confusion between giants and dwarfs in Germanic heroic literature, and referred to the Eddic Regin in that context (see above, 2.6.1). It may be that somehow one name was replaced by the other by sheer mistake; or that the sagaman knew a slightly different Scandinavian tradition in which the names were indeed as recorded here; or that this an authentic piece of German tradition. The last possibility is supported by my suggestion (above, 7.1) that two divergent traditions involving Mímir, his apprentice and king Niðung have been preserved in this saga, and also by the reference in *Biterolf und Dietleib* to the smith Mime (139). It is not clear precisely what light is thrown on this problem by the phrase 'er vęringiar kalla faðmi' (*Þs* ch. 291, p. 347).

In *Þiðreks saga* and *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* the dragon-fight is quite different from the presentation in the Scandinavian sources. In the latter it is premeditated and carefully prepared for, whereas in the continental texts Sigurd is taken by surprise and unarmed. The method of bludgeoning with trees is common to *Þiðreks saga* and the *Lied* together with the *Nibelungenlied* as opposed to the Scandinavian accounts, as is the invulnerability motif. The ability to understand the birds has probably been inserted into *Þiðreks saga* from the Eddic tradition, as no text in German shows any sign of it, and so has the retribution on the foster-father. It would be appropriate to have Seyfrid slaying the smith for his murderous intent, but he does not, possibly because his understanding of the birds is not present.

The smith giving treasure to appease the hero is a detail unique to *Þiðreks saga.* The Scandinavian texts show Sigurð receiving the sword Gram in readiness for the dragon-fight, and the horse Grani has no connection with Regin. Sword and horse are less renowned in continental tradition than in Scandinavian; indeed very little is made of Siegfried's horse in the German sources, other than that Seyfrid loads his (anonymous) horse with the treasure he finds after his dragon-fight (*hS* st. 166). Siegfried's sword is generally called Balmunc, and it seems to be regarded as part of the hero's treasure, however he is reputed to have gained it, be it from the disputed patrimony of Schilbunc and Nibelunc or from a dragon's hoard.[12] Curiously, while *Þiðreks saga* retains Sigurð's healthy fiscal status, it gives no clear indication of how he comes by his wealth. The goods offered him by Mímir other than Gram and Grani are only 'hialm æinn oc æi*n* skiolld oc æina bryniu' (*Þs* ch. 272, p. 314), yet once he is dead Aldrian can ask Attila 'hversu mikid fe mun att hafa Sigurdur sweinn þat sem kallad er Niflunga skattur?' and the king reply 'þat fe er kallad er niflunnga skattur er mest fe saman komid suo ath wier witumm' (ch. 428, p. 370). He has earlier listed to his wife the various sources of Sigurð's income, but there is no support in the text for any of his assertions and reason to doubt them all. 'Þ*at* fyrst er h*ann* toc vndan þeim mikla dreka er h*ann* hafðe drepit' (ch. 397, p. 280) appears to be false, as the dragon is not shown as having possessed anything. 'Nest þ*at* er h*ann* fecc i hernaðe' (*ibid.*) is possible. Brynhild says that Sigurð came to the Niflungs 'sem æin*n* vallari' (ch. 388, p. 262), but she was not there at the time, and so may be speaking from ignorance; it may be sheer rhetoric; or the lucrative warfare

[12]See Gillespie, p. 9.

may have been in company with the Niflungs. Attila's third category is '*þat* er h*a*n*s* faðer hafðe att Sigm*u*ndr k*onungr*' (ch. 397, p. 280). Admittedly, Sigurð did find out his parentage, but we are never told of any contact between father and son which would facilitate the inheritance. It looks as if we have here assembled a collection of likely sources for his wealth which has no genetic connection with the actual narrative of his youthful exploits. Whether the passage originates in a German poem or in the sagaman's own work it is impossible to be sure. It seems probable that this is a relatively late, secondary development to fill a perceived gap, either in the great cycle or in a tale of Sigurð's death and its aftermath which did not cover earlier incidents. Certainly in every other version Sigurd gains his great wealth in a single dramatic incident. It must have dropped out somewhere in the prehistory of our text, but to suggest precisely how, why, where and when would be pure speculation.

I can find no other source for any connection between Brunhild and Sigurd's acquisition of Grani. It is difficult to know why it appears here, as all Scandinavian sources give him the horse before he meets her and the German texts scarcely acknowledge the horse's existence. It does give an excuse for the prior acquaintance between the two. That will be more fully discussed below when I deal with the bridal quest; for now I shall raise the possibility that, faced with no more than hints of a prior acquaintance in the German source, the sagaman took the opportunity provided by the necessity of collecting the horse to add a scene making the prior acquaintance explicit. That is not so much as a theorem, and it faces some considerable problems, such as the fact that Scandinavian tradition would appear to have possessed a fully-fledged prior acquaintance already, and it would have been more economical to have used the pre-existent accounts, which would have fitted as conveniently into my hypothetical gap in the German story, rather than invent a new incident out of the whole cloth.

7.4: Sigurð's chivalry

Less need be said of Sigurð's chivalry (ch. 274, pp. 318-19, ch. 291, pp. 344-47, ch. 297, pp. 354-55, ch. 304-18, pp. 1-37). Indeed the present purpose is almost adequately served by the sweeping generalisation that it is all German. The 'Arthurian' rôle of Sigurð among the champions of Bertangaland is like nothing else in Norse but is closely parallelled by such MHG epics as *Die*

Gedichte vom Rosengarten zu Worms. The one possible exception is the famous ch. 291, which is matched by ch. 23 of *Vǫlsunga saga*.[13] The general opinion is that *Vǫlsunga saga* has merely borrowed the description of Sigurð from *Þiðreks saga*; for example Finch says 'there is no doubt' about it, and Andersson mentions the borrowing as an established fact without bothering to discuss it.[14] The assertion ought to be justified, and a cursory glance is enough to verify that it does contain expressions typical of *Þiðreks saga* but not of *Vǫlsunga*, such as the phrase 'er vęringiar kalla faðmi' (*Þs* p. 347, *Vs* 'er Vęringiar kalla Fafne', p. 55). Less significant may be the word 'kvrteisi' (*Þs* p. 347, *Vs* 'kurteise', p. 55), as Peter Hallberg finds that it and the related words 'kurteiss' and 'kurteisligr' appear seven times in *Vǫlsunga saga*.[15] Still it should be noted that this chapter contains two of the three occurrences of 'kurteisi' in *Vǫlsunga saga*.

Sigurð's chivalry has doubtless been developed to fill a vacuum in the ancestral story. A dragon-fight is splendid, but a hero needs a whole career of great deeds. Comparable events are to be found in the Scandinavian texts, where Sigurð engages in warfare, both youthful vengeance for his father and other campaigns, including a burlesque ecounter with Starkað Stórvirksson in *Norna-Gests þáttr*. The different placing of the extra material in the different traditions is like the divergence between the Arthurian chronicles and romances, with the chronicles adding adventures before the climactic war against the emperor Lucius and the romance tradition fitting in an extended reign after that.

7.5: The bridal quest

7.5.1: Summary

The bridal quest is again a more complex matter; not the story itself as contained in the saga (ch. 319, pp. 37-43), but the debates to which it contributes regarding other versions of the legend, which I shall discuss in due course. Sigurð goes home with Gunnar and marries his sister Grímhild. He then advises Gunnar to wed Brynhild and negotiates with her on his behalf. She

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[13]*Vǫlsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. by Magnus Olsen (Copenhagen: Møller, 1906-08), pp. 55-57.

[14]Finch, p. xxxvii; Theodore M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, Islandica, 43 (Ithaca: Cornell U. P., 1980), p. 22.

[15]Peter Hallberg, 'Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur as a Corpus', *AfnF*, 97 (1982), pp. 1-35; see table 2, pp. 34-35.

prefers Sigurð and refers to a former promise of his on which she claims that he is reneging. (In fairness to him it should be pointed out that there is no other mention of any such precontract.) Nevertheless she consents to marry Gunnar but refuses to consummate the marriage. After being tied up and left hanging from a nail for the first three nights of the honeymoon, Gunnar confides in Sigurð. Sigurð swaps clothes with Gunnar, hides in the bedroom until dark and then deflowers Brynhild. He takes a ring from her finger and replaces it with another. This is all accomplished without anybody knowing about it and before they return to Niflungaland.

7.5.2: Overview of analogues

All the major analogues agree that Sigurd marries Gudrun, but they differ significantly on the circumstances.[16] In *Þiðreks saga* Sigurð meets Gunnar in battle, goes home with him and then meets and marries his sister. According to the *Nibelungenlied* Sivrit hears of Kriemhild's beauty and travels to Burgundy to woo her, greeting her kinsmen with an arrogant challenge and campaigning alongside them for a year without ever laying eyes on his beloved, whom he is finally allowed to marry after winning Brünhilt for Gunther. Snorri mentions Sigurð's meeting with Brynhild, sworn-brotherhood with Gunnar, wedding with Guðrún and wooing expedition in that order, without further comment, whereas *Vǫlsunga saga* speaks of Sigurð and Brynhild swearing oaths to each other on two separate occasions, and Queen Grímhild giving him a draught of forgetfulness so that he could be induced to marry her daughter Guðrún, after which he helps Gunnar to woo Brynhild. *Grípisspá* presumably agrees with the saga that Sigurð marries Guðrún unintentionally, although our only evidence for it is 'fyr svicom annars' (st. 33). It does show him madly in love with Brynhild and forgetting her when he has stayed with Gjúki for a single night, but the circumstances are not explained. Other poems in the Codex Regius are even less explicit about that question, but so far as we can ascertain, given the Great Lacuna, they seem unanimous that in marrying Guðrún he is somehow betraying Brynhild. The prior acquaintance motif is somewhat disguised by the fact that in *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* the woman awakened

[16]It is difficult to find a useful name to cover forms as diverse as Guðrún and Kriemhilt. I have chosen the popular Anglicised version of the Scandinavian form, for various reasons: it is popular and widespread; it is less open to confusion than 'Grimhild', which is applied to the character's mother in the Eddas and *Vǫlsunga saga*; and it means that the Scandinavian and continental forms are each put to two uses.

on the mountain-top is called Sigrdrífa. In fact the only Eddic poem which unambiguously states that Sigurð met Brynhild before marrying Guðrún is the late, synoptic *Grípisspá* (st. 27, 33).

The matter of the prior acquaintance requires a good deal of discussion, but before that the different versions of Sigurd's wedding Gudrun should be rounded off with *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*, in which no Brunhild-figure appears and the main plot revolves around Seyfrid's quest for his beloved Krimhilt. This and *Vǫlsunga saga* are the only texts in which the matter is perfectly clear with no dubiety: here the princess is Seyfrid's one true love and there is no other; in the saga he is betrothed to Brynhild and cheated out of her. Elsewhere it is full of uncertainty. *Grípisspá* may tell the same story as *Vǫlsunga saga*, but it is not explicit on the relationship between Sigurð and Brynhild. The *Nibelungenlied* and *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* alike show Sigurd apparently quite happy to marry Gudrun and with no other ties, but having special knowledge about Brunhild, who desperately wants him. In fact *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* adds that Sigurð 'um ætti, ef hann eiga knætti' [sc. Brynhild] (st. 3). Other sources contain similar dark hints, which may in fact be no hints at all but only modern interpretation based on our knowledge of the unambiguous *Vǫlsunga saga.*

Disregarding for the moment the historical development of these traditions, we may take it that the author of *Vǫlsunga saga* had a typical understanding of the legends in thirteenth-century Scandinavia, and that if he conceived of the marriage of Sigurð and Guðrún as being arranged treacherously, and we find no indication of this in any of the German sources, then the situation found in *Þiðreks saga*, where Sigurð marries Grímhild with no ado, is likely to reflect an unaltered German version. While it is by no means certain that a Norseman would automatically consider Sigurð's marriage deceitful, it is reasonably probable that the deception is peculiarly Scandinavian, and so its lack deprives us of any evidence of alteration. It is not in itself evidence of faithful transmission, though; we may be able to cast more light on that by internal analysis for consistency with the prior acquaintance motif.

For all questions regarding Brunhild, we may leave aside *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid.* There has been considerable debate about whether or not Seyfrid's pursuit of Krimhild is a reflex of the *Erweckungssage* that is thought to lie behind *Sigrdrífumál*, but 'the differences are of such a nature that it is very debatable whether the German and Norse accounts are fundamentally the

same story at all'.[17] Indeed Brunhild's absence has been taken as a distinctive feature of the *Lied*: '*Brot* minus Brünhild and her honour equals *Hürnen Seyfrid.*'[18] A point which will be discussed below is the wisdom of Sigrdrífa and Brynhild's knowledge of Sigurð's parentage; some have sought to bring the dwarf Eugel into that equation from the *Lied*, where he too knows the hero's ancestry, but 'A dwarf as dispenser of wisdom requires no special explanation'.[19]

So we are left with the *Nibelungenlied* as the sole repository of German tradition about Brünhild, against the Scandinavian contingent of *Vǫlsunga saga*, the Eddic poems and Snorri's prose epitome. That is bound to give a probably fallacious appearance of greater consistency in the continental account as opposed to the diversity of the Norse records. That should be borne in mind in the following discussion.

7.5.3: Prior acquaintance

To begin with the clearer indications of a meeting between Sigurd and Brunhild before the wooing expedition, and proceed thence to the possibly chimerical suggestions, the simplest and best-remembered version is found in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, where, after slaying Fáfnir and liberating his treasure, Sigurð finds a woman asleep on a mountaintop. 'Þa vaknaþi hon ok nefndiz Hildr; hon er kavllvð Brynhildr, ok var valkyria.'[20] There Snorri leaves it, and he makes no further use of the incident. From his compressed style it is difficult to be sure what details he knew about later developments, but his account motivates the rest of the plot adequately without reference to the meeting, so we cannot assume that there were any love-passages between the two.

The only other source that identifies the woman sleeping on the mountain with Brynhild is *Vǫlsunga saga*. It is interesting to note in passing that she is there given a sister called Bekkhild 'þviat hun hafde heima verit ok numit hanyrde', and, more importantly, a corresponding explanation is given for the prefix of the more warlike sister's name: 'Brynhilldr for med hialm ok bryniu ok geck *at* vighum' (ch. 24, p. 57). This might mean that they were both called 'Hild' originally, as Snorri's wording would suggest for the valkyrie. That would tie in with the comment

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[17]King, p. 47.
[18]*Ibid.*, p. 82.
[19]Andersson, p. 235.
[20]*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1931), p 130.

in *Helreið Brynhildar* that 'Héto mic allir í Hlymdǫlom I Hildi undir hiálmi, hverr er kunni' (st. 7). Not much can be made out of this, given that Hild is such a common name-element, both for women in general and for valkyries specifically (in the latter context also as a name by itself).[21]

Be that as it may, the saga follows the awakening with an exchange of oaths (their nature undisclosed) and then a second meeting between the two. This is a much more conventional courtship episode, with the hero accidentally sighting the fair lady, learning her identity, declaring his love and being more or less accepted. The only acknowledgement given to the previous meeting is the last two words of the phrase 'ok svaurdu nu eida af nyiu' (p. 60); pure narratorial lip-service. It is clear that in the source this was the pair's first meeting. This is also quite certainly a romantic encounter, which the previous one was not so obviously. One motif that the two episodes share and to which we shall have cause to advert later is the wisdom passed from woman to man: runic knowledge on the mountaintop and foretelling here.

The Eddic poems are less explicit on the matter. *Grípisspá* is quite ambiguous on this point. Sigurð will certainly meet a mail-clad woman on a hill and Brynhild at the abode of Heimir, but there is no indication whether or not the two figures are one and the same. It is curious that the first is left nameless, as the poem tends to be meticulous about identifying people. I count twenty personal names (including Grani) and no other characters left nameless except the sons of Hunding. It may be that the poet, or a subsequent link in the transmission, was hedging his bets. It should be noted that despite the extremely summary nature of the telling, there is room for a recognisable description of the 'Sigrdrífa' incident, runes and all, yet no mention of Brynhild's prophesying. It is possible that prophecy of a prophecy would have been excessive. *Grípisspá* does reflect the same tradition as *Vǫlsunga saga* otherwise, showing the meeting with Brynhild at Heimir's hall, with love followed by oaths which are then forgotten.

Sigrdrífa is named towards the end of *Fáfnismál* and in the prose of *Sigrdrífumál*. Neither poem has any mention of Brynhild. It is only in *Fáfnismál* that the name 'Sigrdrífa' is found in verse, and no version of the legend that separates Sigrdrífa from Brynhild gives the meeting with

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[21]Of course the name means 'battle', so there can be some difficulty in distinguishing between a personification and a separately imagined Valkyrie. This is clearly to be seen in the entry in Anthony Faulkes' 'Annotated Index of Names' in his Everyman translation of Snorri's *Edda*, where he also points out the lack of distinction from Hǫgni's daughter.

the former any consequences. The legend has not been fully integrated into the cycle; unless of course it is an offshoot which has not achieved a life of its own. Beside the likelihood that Snorri and the originator of *Vǫlsunga saga* both identified a distinct Sigrdrífa with Brynhild we have to set the possibility that Sigrdrífa developed out of the oracular aspect of Brynhild before *Fáfnismál* reached its current form and that the prose writers were merely returning to an authentic pattern. Snorri's abstract is particularly interesting, because he takes the setting of Sigrdrífa and the name of Brynhild and combines them, leaving aside any awkward duplication. This may have been merely his artistic skill, selecting and unifying, but he may be representing his source accurately. He clearly has access to sources no longer extant -- witness Gjúki's extra daughter, Guðný, of whom he makes no use, so introducing her name must be gratuitous if he is not simply recording the received tradition.

We cannot tell how *Sigrdrífumál* ended, because the Great Lacuna has intervened before the conclusion of the poem and *Vǫlsunga saga* gives the woman a different identity, so there may also have been structural alterations. The same causes also deprive us of the beginning of *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*, so we are forced to rely on conjecture for its poet's view of earlier events. There is not much to go on; Brynhild claims that Sigurð swore oaths to her, but there is nothing to indicate the truth or falsehood of that statement or, giving her the benefit of the doubt, when the oaths are supposed to have been sworn; i.e. before or during the wooing expedition.

As has already been noted, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* has no mention of any meeting between Sigurð and Brynhild before the poem opens with his riding to the sons of Gjúki. The expressions 'hann um ætti, ef hann eiga knætti' (st. 3) and 'Hafa scal ec Sigurð --eða þó svelti!' (st. 6) may suggest some sort of attachment between the two, but they do not presuppose earlier knowledge of each other. The remark 'Sigurðr [...] vega kunni' (st. 3) is more suggestive. 'Vega' may be the verb 'to fight', but combat is not in question, so it looks more as if Sigurð knew the way. But if it is a noun it is plural; and while that is perfectly acceptable on the above interpretation, it may also be interpreted as meaning a general knowledge of ways, which is a standard heroic trait.[22] There is at most, then, a hint that Sigurð may have encountered Brynhild before, and it might never have been suggested had we not had certain evidence of it from

[22]R. G. Finch, 'Brunhild and Siegfried', *SBVS*, 17 (1968), 224-60 (p. 230).

elsewhere; although the elliptical style of the poem justifies us in using external evidence to fill out the story.

There remain the two poems *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Oddrúnargrátr*. Neither of them clarifies the situation to any appreciable degree. *Helreið* goes straight from eight chaste nights (presumably that is the meaning of 'sem hann minn bróðir um borinn væri' (st. 12)) with Sigurð to Guðrún's accusation, linked to it by the word 'Því' (st. 13). This leads to Brynhild's discovery of the deception, so it would appear that the aforementioned incident was the wooing expedition rather than a previous affair. Brynhild's silence on any such episode suggests that this may be the first text to give us evidence that there was no prior acquaintance. *Oddrúnargrátr* is even more allusive, devoting scarcely a stanza to the events from Brynhild's first encounter with Sigurð to her plotting for vengeance. It implies a story in which Brynhild is won deceptively by force and that is her first contact with Sigurð, but it is not conclusive proof. The argument is mostly from silence, and such arguments are always dangerous. The relevant stanza reads (ignoring the lines which announce the arrival of Sigurð):

> Þá var víg vegit vǫlsco sverði,
> oc borg brotin, su er Brynhildr átti;
> vara langt af því, heldr válítið,
> unz þær vélar vissi allar. (st. 18)

The *Nibelungenlied* too is without explicit indication of a former amour between Sivrit and Brünhilt, but there are hints of the same order as those in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*. Hagen says of Sivrit 'im daz ist sô kündec, wíe ez um Prünhilde stât' (st. 331), and the narrator declares that Brünhild's land 'was ir deheinem niwan Sîvride erkant' (st. 382). General knowledge of the situation need mean no more than that he is well-informed, just as Hagen is about him, as is evinced by Âventiure 3. Ortwin says that 'Dem [Hagenen] sint kunt diu rîche und ouch diu vremden lant' (st. 82), and Hagen prefaces his disquisition with

> ich wil des wol verjehen,
> swie ich Sîvriden nimmer habe gesehen,
> sô wil ich wol gelouben, swie ez dar umbe stât,
> daz ez sî der recke, der dort sô hêrlîchen gât. (st. 86)

But Sivrit's peculiar knowledge of Islant must mean that he has been there before. It adds specificity to his assertion that 'die rehten wazzerstrâzen die sint mir wol bekant' (st. 378). That is reminiscent of 'vega kunni', quoted above from *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, and may provide supporting evidence for a prior acquaintance in the Norse text.

Before examining the motif in *Þiðreks saga* it is appropriate to sum up its position in the Scandinavian and German analogues. It is certain that by the time of *Þiðreks saga* (assuming *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Snorra Edda* to be roughly contemporary with it) Scandinavian authors knew of an earlier encounter between Sigurð and Brynhild, and it was doubtless romantic in nature. Others, however, seem to acknowledge no such incident. Both in Germany and in Scandinavia there are tales which seem to indicate that the two characters have met before the wooing expedition, but which neither state it explicitly nor give any clue to what went on. Constant factors in what we do know of the meeting from the indubitable sources are the giving of wisdom and the swearing of oaths. We do not know that there was necessarily a love affair, although one strand of tradition definitely states that. The trouble is that two strands have become intertwined, and when only one seems to be present it is not clear whether we have an original simple form or a later simplified one.

In *Þiðreks saga* Sigurð and Brynhild obviously know each other before Sigurð recommends that Gunnar woo her. The difficulty is the nature of their relationship, polarised between two scenes in the one story, where first they meet, carry out what is in essence a business transaction, and part with no further complications, and then they meet again and the matter of a previous betrothal is mentioned for the first time. The question is, has the betrothal been suppressed in the first scene or added in the second? A naïve reading would say that as it is found in Norse texts and not in the *Nibelungenlied* it must be a Scandinavian innovation; but we have already seen that the Norse texts show quite an array of versions, one of them matching very closely that in the *Nibelungenlied*; and in the absence of any other German evidence we must be chary of assuming that the *Nibelungenlied* is the perfect exemplar of continental evidence.

In section 7.3.2 above I suggested that the sagaman might have invented the first scene in order to make explicit the hinted relationship found in his source, and that collecting Grani was a suitable pretext. The obvious alternative is that the maker of the *Nibelungenlied* chose to play

down what was present in the common source of epic and saga. Aside from the strange transaction about the horse, my concern earlier in the chapter, there is a lot in favour of the theory of alteration by the poet, particularly the persuasive convergence of diverse data. I questioned the likelihood of the sagaman's inventing an episode so different from anything extant; and the hypothesis that this scene is not in fact original gains support from the similarity of Sigurð's behaviour here to that described by Oddrún: 'Þá var víg vegit vǫlsco sverði, l oc borg brotin, su er Brynhildr átti' (*Od*, st. 18); cf. 'hann hæuir brotit upp borgar liðet. oc firir þetta uilia þeir drepa hann oc nu bregðr Sigurðr sinu suerði' &c. (*Þs*, ch.273, p. 316). (It should be remembered, however, that *Oddrúnargrátr* shows no sign of associating this incident with a wooing before Gunnar's.) Coming from another direction, Andersson argues cogently that the *Nibelungenlied*'s account of Sigurð's wooing of Kriemhild draws on an abandoned tale of his courtship of Brünhild.[23] Reference to *Þiðreks saga* is implicit throughout his argument, as when he says 'another possibility is that the emphasis on danger is carried over from the traditional perils experienced by Siegfried in his wooing of Brynhild, the forced entry into her fortress and the battle with her retainers.'[24]

If, then, the incident in *Þiðreks saga* derives from a version of the love-match, why is there no mention of love, let alone of any betrothal? It makes no sense to omit the affair deliberately when Brynhild will declare Sigurð's faithlessness when next she sees him, and it does not look as if just the relevant phrase can simply have dropped out, as the whole tenor of the scene seems at odds with any amorous dealings. It would be possible to alter it significantly by the addition of a few sentences without deleting anything that stands in the text, but there would be no justification for such a procedure other than internal logic. We must assume editing (albeit incompetent) by the sagaman, and seek to find his purpose. Andersson postulates 'a writer for whom the norm was a version akin to *Forna* [i.e. the complete version of what survives as *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*] without the prior betrothal'.[25] He makes that conditional on the saga having reached its current form without knowledge of the putative *Sigurðarkviða in meiri*, but that is

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[23]*The Legend of Brynhild*, pp. 157-61.
[24]p. 160.
[25]p. 143.

unnecessary. Andersson considers *Helreið* late and elements of *Oddrúnargrátr* derived indirectly from *Sigurðarkviða in meiri*,[26] but both of those can be construed as knowing of no prior acquaintance or love-passages. The only necessary conclusion, if that line of reasoning is followed, is that a version was available which lacked the betrothal; and that need not presuppose the absence of any other version. It is evident from the Codex Regius that those responsible for passing on the legendary tradition had no objection to preserving contradictory accounts of 'the same story'.

Þiðreks saga, then, probably contains a scene common to the German source of the *Nibelungenlied* and some branches of Scandinavian tradition, but it has been obfuscated. A guarantee of authenticity may be Brynhild's access to privileged information, namely the identity of Sigurð's parents. Nobody could actually have known that short of supernatural aid, and the Brynhild of *Vǫlsunga saga* shows herself very much at home with such ability, recognising Sigurð at first sight, teaching him the runes and interpreting Guðrún's dream. Only before the wooing expedition does she display this wisdom, so we cannot tell whether it is to be found in the continental legends or is a peculiarly Norse characteristic. In *Þiðreks saga* of course she may simply have the conventional heroic knowledge that Hagen shows and Sigurd may share, but something special appears to be indicated by 'ef þv veitz *æigi* at sægia mer. þa kan ec at sægia þer' (ch. 273, p. 317).

7.5.4: The winning of Brunhild

Besides the prior acquaintance it is necessary to consider the means of winning Brunhild and of subduing her thereafter. Again the *Nibelungenlied* is the German text to be considered, and distinctions should be drawn between the individual Scandinavian sources. Having said that, it will still be permissible to generalise about Scandinavian tradition based on a study of all the Eddic texts and *Vǫlsunga saga*; after all, it is arguable that that is precisely what the compiler of *Vǫlsunga saga* did, setting out the story as he found it in native sources with only a brief supplementary use of *Þiðreks saga*.

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[26]pp. 115, 125.

According to the *Nibelungenlied*, Brünhild is won in a series of athletic feats, which Sivrit performs invisibly while Gunther mimes. Similarly, Gunther only manages to consummate the marriage with the unseen assistance of Sivrit, although he carries out the defloration himself. That is generally considered to be a more polite adaptation of the story as contained in *Þiðreks saga*, although some have reasoned that the saga in fact reflects a later coarsening of taste. There are several minor variations between the two, such as the fact that the epic only gives Gunther one unsuccessful night whereas Gunnar in the saga has to wait for three, and Sigurð replaces Brynhild's ring with one of his own but Sivrit does not; but in my opinion there are two important distinctions to be drawn between the accounts; the wooing itself and the use of magic.

The burlesque triathlon is confined to the *Nibelungenlied*; *Þiðreks saga* has not a hint of it, nor do the other Norse texts back up the German. The most familiar obstacle to be overcome is *Vǫlsunga saga*'s wall of fire, attested also in *Skáldskaparmál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Helreið Brynhildar*. *Sigrdrífumál*'s introductory prose depicts a shield-wall 'svá sem eldr brynni', although we must remember that this is not connected with the wooing expedition. The other pieces that mention the winning of Brynhild give no details about the difficulties, but *Grípisspá* speaks of Sigurð and Gunnar changing appearances and both it and *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* report Sigurð's lying chastely with Brynhild. As far as can be deduced, Scandinavian tradition is unanimous in representing Brynhild's marriage as being due to deception, probably assisted by magic. The same is true of the *Nibelungenlied*; so the version in *Þiðreks saga* corresponds with neither. Here we have a straightforward negotiation rather than a test. Before discussing that further, it is convenient to elucidate the second anomaly as well. The consummation of the marriage is only an issue in *Þiðreks saga* and the *Nibelungenlied*, and while the latter uses magic to accomplish that just as it does to bring about the wedding in the first place, the former uses none on either occasion.

There are suggestions in the other sources that Brunhild was gained by negotiation. *Vǫlsunga saga* has the Gjúkungs seeking and obtaining parental consent, and Snorri precedes the ordeal of fire with an embassage to her brother Atli. In *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* family influence is paramount, as Atli threatens to deprive his sister of her inheritance unless she agrees to marry. There may be an echo of this in the *Nibelungenlied* when Brünhild consults her kinsmen before

marrying Gunther, but only to inform them of a *fait accompli*. Yet all of these include the testing as well, so *Þiðreks saga* is unique in omitting it. It seems improbable that the German original was without it as well, but it is *prima facie* more likely than that the sagaman left out an idea which was in both his source and his native tradition. One possible explanation in favour of the hypothesis that he did is that the two versions of the test were so different that he may have preferred to ignore the incident altogether rather than attempt a reconciliation.

No such suggestion will do for the absence of magic. If there is no test of prowess there is no occasion for deception then, but having retained the defloration scene an opportunity is left to use the motif that has surely been handed down, and it is ignored. Admittedly the scene is carried out more or less convincingly, if we can believe that a mere change of clothes is enough to make Sigurð and Gunnar indistinguishable, but it can scarcely be doubted that the continental sports and deflowering are a twofold development from a single incident, probably the flame-ride preserved in Norse, and the magical disguise is ancestrally common to them both.

The absence of the test may therefore be allied to the absence of magic. It is arguable that the sagaman prefers to avoid magic. Technical prowess is familiar enough, and he makes use of it to a positively tiresome extent, not only in the story of Velent but whenever weapons are in play. Giants, dragons, sea-women and the like can be considered *lusus naturae*, and are perfectly in keeping with the rationalism of the Prologue; but such a world-view might have no place for magic. I can find no certain instance of magic in the saga other than the victory-stone or stones (ch. 112, pp. 106-07, ch. 216, p. 231 [MS A]) and Apollonius's love-charm (ch. 337, pp. 112-13), and the sagaman certainly distances himself from the first of these: 'En þat veit ek eigi, hvárt þat var af náttúru sjálfs steinsins eða olli átrúnaðr sá, er þeir hǫfðu á steininum' (p. 107).[27] Even Sigurð's horny skin is very likely to have been acceptable as a genuine piece of natural history.

It is interesting to observe that much magic has been dropped from the sources in the making of *Vǫlsunga saga*, as R. G. Finch points out.[28] 'And yet -- none of these omissions in any way materially affected the main outlines of the narrative.'[29] In the portions of the narrative

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[27]I owe this observation to Peter Hallberg, 'Some Aspects of the Fornaldarsögur as a Corpus', p. 8.
[28]'The Treatment of Poetic Sources by the Compiler of *Vǫlsunga saga*', *SBVS*, 16 (1965), 315-53 (pp. 330-33).
[29]p. 331.

parallelled in *Þiðreks saga*, the supernatural elements are 'more or less organic'; Finch singles out 'The magic potions, the shape-changing' and reckons that 'Brynhild's fire surely is essential' and 'Sigurd's understanding of the conversation between the birds in *Fm.* could not be omitted'.[30] In *Vǫlsunga saga* 'The compiler clearly considered mythological and supernatural elements that were not strictly germane as irrelevant, and in accordance with the principle amply demonstrated above, he simply removed them.'[31] It looks as if the maker of *Þiðreks saga*, on the other hand, had no such scruples about whether or not such elements were necessary to the plot, and deleted them regardless.

If we conclude from this that the sagaman set his face firmly against magical aids, or even just that the texture of the work as a whole tends to exclude them, that is a satisfactory explanation for the unparallelled form of the wooing expedition. Magic is inseparable from the received versions on both sides, so if magic is deemed inappropriate then the events that require it must be excised. The details of what is missing can only be deduced *a priori*, and on that basis are likely to have resembled the pattern of the *Nibelungenlied.* Summing up the arguments about this whole segment, we can be reasonably confident that there was some sort of prior betrothal, but that Sigurð married Guðrún of his own free will. Whether this originally took place before or after the expedition is not certain. The poet of the *Nibelungenlied* could have postponed it to provide a magnificent double wedding, or the originator of *Þiðreks saga* could have brought it forward, following the Scandinavian texts, to obviate the need for any deception in the wooing by making Sigurð ineligible for Brynhild's hand.

7.6: Sigurð's death

The final episode of Sigurð's life is, naturally enough, his death (ch. 387-91, pp. 258-68). This may be best discussed together with aspects of the bridal quest in the chapter on the Niflungar, but it is appropriate to place at least an account of it here. When Grímhild fails to stand in her presence, Brynhild asserts her own superior status. Grímhild then asks who took Brynhild's maidenhead; receiving the reply that it was Gunnar, she responds that it was in fact Sigurð, and displays the ring as evidence. Brynhild goes and denounces the deception to Gunnar's face, and

[30] p. 332.
[31] p. 333.

demands vengeance. None is promised until she mentions Sigurð's overweening power, whereupon Gunnar agrees that he must be stopped. When Sigurð appears Hǫgni suggests a hunting trip; urged by Brynhild with promises of treasure, Hǫgni kills Sigurð with a spear between the shoulderblades. The body is taken back to the court and thrown at Brynhild's command onto the bed where Grímhild lies sleeping. She wakes to find him there and perceives by his undamaged armour that he was murdered. Hǫgni tells her Sigurð was slain by a wild boar, but Grímhild retorts that Hǫgni himself was the wild boar.

Sections of this match the *Nibelungenlied* word for word (allowing of course for difference in language), and it is certain that the two works share a source in large part.[32] Much of the material is common to both Scandinavia and the continent, and need not be discussed in detail. More concerns the characterisation of the Niflungs and so is reserved for the next chapter. There are a few points though which are best dealt with here. Mostly they confirm the German nature of the plot. The quarrel of the queens is only indoors, as in the *Nibelungenlied*, whereas the Scandinavian records insist on its taking place while bathing. The evidence is skewed by the two-part quarrel in *Vǫlsunga saga*, where there is a hall setting as well as a river one; but my point is that in no extant text from the Scandinavian tradition does the quarrel happen only inside.

In the *Nibelungenlied* Gunther's motivation for carrying out Sivrit's murder is the same as in *Þiðreks saga*; it is the mention of his rival's power that decides him. The nearest equivalent in Norse is when Gunnar says 'Radum vid þa gullinu ok aullu rikinu' (*Vs* ch. 32, p. 78), but that is his thought after deciding, and nobody has called Sigurð a political threat. I shall examine this conversation more fully below, in 'The Niflungs'. Finally, the setting and agent of Sigurð's death are definitely German. *Brot* admittedly has him slain outside, but the prose piece following it specifies that 'þýðverscir menn segia svá, at þeir dræpi hann úti í scógi' (*Frá dauða Sigurðar*). Both Snorri and the author of *Vǫlsunga saga*, who were presumably trying to pass on the

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[32]Compare in particular Grímhild's outburst with Kriemhild's: 'Jll þickia mer þin sár huar fectu þau. hér stendr þinn gulbuinn skiolldr hæill oc ækki er hann spilltr oc þinn hialmr er hvergi brotinn. hui vartu sua saR þu mant væra myrðr. vissi ek hverR þat hæfdi gort þa mætti þat væra hans gialld' (*Þs*, ch. 391, pp. 268); 'owê mich mînes leides! nu ist dir dîn schilt | mit swerten niht verhouwen; du lîst ermorderôt. | wesse ich, wer iz het getân, ich riet' im immer sînen tôt' (*NL*, st. 1012).

normally accepted Scandinavian version, place his murder in bed. Nor is there any suggestion anywhere in the Scandinavian materials that the murderer was Hǫgni.

7.7: Conclusions

To conclude: the story of Sigurð's birth agrees with Scandinavian rather than continental tradition in orphaning him, but the legends of his origins are so various that it is difficult to draw any certain conclusions about it. The explicitly treacherous smith appears to be a German feature accompanying the concentration on the young boy's brute strength, but here combined with the Scandinavian idea that smith and serpent are brothers. I leave unexplained the peculiarity of the saga's presentation of how he came by his horse and his wealth.

The original probably included a betrothal between Sigurð and Brynhild and a willing marriage between Sigurð and Grímhild, but if so then it is the only source to make Sigurð unequivocally and deliberately unfaithful, unless a magic potion has been supressed here through rationalism and in the *Nibelungenlied* because of courtly ideals. It is very probable that the magic in the winning and subduing of Brynhild has been written out. The death of Sigurð is presented with greater loyalty to the source-text, as far as we can tell, but the question of the sagaman's freedom in earlier portions of the narrative is vexed by the greater diversity of tradition the further before Sigurd's death it gets.

Chapter 8: The Niflungs

8.1: Introduction

The bulk of this section of legend in *Þiðreks saga* is found in 'Niflunga saga' (ch. 396-413, pp. 275-328), but I shall also take other passages into consideration.[1] A proper survey of the portrayal of the Niflungs in *Þiðreks saga* will require some overlap with my last chapter, on 'Child Sigurð', but viewing events from a different perspective. There I was concerned with the wooing expedition and Sigurð's death with particular reference to the young hero, naturally therefore concentrating on the action; here I wish to examine the internal dynamics of Aldrian's family and their characterisation, best expressed in their talk, both during and before their dealings with Sigurð. I shall discuss that first and then continue to events following Sigurð's death, dealing with those in an integrated manner by investigating both words and deeds.

8.2: Hǫgni's paternity

Our first acquaintance with Niflungaland deals with the begetting of Hǫgni by an elf on the king's wife (ch. 274, pp. 319-22). Then we get the same story all over again immediately, but in a different version (ch. 275, pp. 322-23). Here the king's name is not Aldrian but Írung, and instead of three sons, Gunnar, Gernoz and Gíslher, he has four, the second being Guthorm. We never hear of this Írung again, and the last we are told of Guthorm is that he stays at home, '*fi*r*ir* þvi at han*n* er seucr' (ch. 276, p. 324). One might suspect that Guthorm has been inserted from the earlier Norse sources and then forgotten, but he is associated with Írung, who has no other resemblance to the Scandinavian equivalent, who is consistently called Gjúki. Clearly the saga preserves two variant German accounts, for no obvious reason. The most reasonable explanation is that the compiler placed in its chronological position the tradition informing the conception of the Niflung royal family through most of the saga, and then failed to adapt the story of Þiðrek's feast to be consistent with it.

The notion that Hǫgni is an elf's son is unique to *Þiðreks saga*. The Eddic texts make him a full brother of Gunnar, whereas in the *Nibelungenlied* he is kin to the royal family in some

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[1] I use Guðni's application of the title as a conveniently specific term to cover a separate section of the cycle, although Mb declares 'hær hæfr vpp sagu Niflunga' before ch. 387 (p. 258), thus including both 'Dráp Sigurðar sveins' and the unrelated 'Þáttr af Hertnið ok Ostasiu'.

unspecified degree but their vassal. His lack of the normal Gjúkung alliteration on 'G' casts doubt on the Scandinavian state of affairs, and the aforementioned duplication of the tale of his begetting suggests that more than one German source knows of it. This may be another instance in which the *Nibelungenlied*'s predilection for 'höfische Verfeinerung' has altered the original.[2]

8.3: The murder plot

Not until after Brynhild has discovered the deception practised on her does Hǫgni actually take any significant part in the action. When she makes her first complaint he bids her behave as if nothing had happened, and only when she expands on Sigurð's increasing power and prestige does Gunnar make a contribution, which is to declare that Sigurð shall no longer rule over them. He seems to be rather impressionable, as this is the first suggestion that Sigurð might be any threat to his dynasty, and he is clearly much concerned with power politics. That is a consistent feature of the figure throughout the traditions. When Hagen points out that 'ob Sîvrit niht enlebte, sô wurde im undertân I vil der künege lande' it obviously has some effect on Gunther, although exactly what is not clear from 'der helt des trûren began' (*NL*, st. 870). His next objection shifts ground, starting with an affirmation of his faith in Sivrit and ending with a worry that it would be too difficult to kill him. We may feel that that is the real reason for his hesitation; and when subsequently Hagen says that he can manage it, Gunther simply asks how. Gunnar in *Vǫlsunga saga* makes up his own mind about the killing. His motive, according to his soliloquy, is to keep his wife, but he tells Hǫgni his decision with the addition of 'Radum vid þa gullinu ok aullu rikinu' (p. 78, ch. 32). The only Eddic source to give any details of the decision-making process is *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, where the idea seems to crystallise in conversation with Hǫgni, but it is Gunnar's own assertion that 'fyrr scal ec míno fiǫrvi láta, I enn þeirar meyiar meiðmom týna' (st. 15). Both here and in *Vǫlsunga saga* the decision is precipitated by Brynhild's warning that otherwise he will lose both his possessions (through her according to the poem but unqualified in the saga) and her.

It may be important to distinguish who originates suggestions in each text. Gunnar is the driving force throughout this section of *Vǫlsunga saga*; Brynhild demands Sigurð's death, with

[2]See Andreas Heusler, *Nibelungensage und Nibelungenlied*, 3rd edn (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1929), p. 126; my quotation is from p. 121.

menaces as listed above, but her husband picks up the idea and runs with it. Hǫgni blocks him at every step, but Gunnar forges ahead notwithstanding. It may have something to do with the fact that Brynhild is present all through this conversation and even at the end she is promising to withhold her sexual favours until the job is done; but still this is a distinctive feature of the saga as opposed to the other versions. Gunnar says that Sigurð is to die; Hǫgni replies that Sigurð is an asset, and they will be worse off if they listen to Brynhild; Gunnar suggests getting Gutthorm to kill him; Hǫgni disapproves; but Gunnar concludes the debate by insisting that either Sigurð or he himself must die. This forms a notable contrast to the sequence elsewhere. As may be expected, the most similar text is *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, but the emphasis there is very different. The saga's Brynhild openly avers that Gunnar's life is in danger unless he slay Sigurð and his son; the nearest she of the poem comes to it is to to point out that the son is likely to avenge the father. This is unlikely to have anything to do with Gunnar's mention of the possibility of losing his life (st. 15, quoted above), which reads like pure rhetoric. Accordingly the lay contains no threat to the king's life to decide the argument. Hǫgni cites their oaths to Sigurð and his value to them, and the record of the conversation only shows an answer to the first problem, namely that Gutthorm is not bound by oaths to Sigurð. Then Gunnar seems to get his own way without further hindrance.

The presentation of the plot in the *Nibelungenlied* is almost diametrically opposed to these accounts. Here Hagen takes the lead and Gunther raises objections. Indeed as soon as Hagen decides that Sivrit must pay for his supposed misdeed we hear that 'die helde rieten den Sîfrides tôt' (st. 865). In their footnote the editors remark that '*die helden* müssen Hagen und Gunther sein. Dessen Anwesenheit wird als selbstverständlich vorausgesetzt.' Certainly Gunther is quoted a few strophes later with no stage direction marking his entrance, so we must assume that he is present here; but it is an ignominious position for him to be in, brought in to ratify his vassal's resolve and simply assumed to be present. His first line takes up the Hǫgnian position of stressing Sivrit's usefulness and good faith. What undermines his determination to let Sigurð live appears to be Hagen's persistence 'in allen zîten' (st. 870), the thought of political gain, and Hagen's assurance that he will manage the matter. Gunther seems a practitioner of the art of the possible -- or rather the art of pretending that one wouldn't want what turns out to be impossible anyway. Certainly his convictions look decidedly negotiable.

Þiðreks saga has much less talk at this point. As in *Vǫlsunga saga* Brynhild is present while the decision is made, and, like both the other Norse accounts, the only men concerned are Gunnar and Hǫgni. That probably forms no very sharp contrast with the *Nibelungenlied*, as there the other miscellaneous retainers are strictly supernumerary. It is possible that the underlying tale restricted the discussion to these principal parties. The younger brother may also have been present; in the *Nibelungenlied* Giselher speaks up in support of Sivrit before ever Gunther does, and the passage in *Þiðreks saga* announces the arrival of Gernoz along with the other two but then forgets him until after the plotting is done, when, opaquely, 'G*unnarr konungr* oc h*ans* broðer haugni rida nu i borgina [...] oc sua lætr nu G*unnarr konungr* oc h*augni* oc g*er*notz sem þ*æir* hafi ækci vettan*n*a spurt' (ch. 389, p. 263). That difficulty may explain the scribal variants that, instead of listing which brothers are there, simply say 'þeir' (p. 261, fn. 17), 'aller' (p. 263, fn. 2), or both (p. 263, fn. 3).

It is impossible to ascertain with which tradition the behaviour of Gunnar and Hǫgni is more closely aligned, as they say so little and there is no apparent manoeuvring between them. Hǫgni's bidding that Brynhild should act as if nothing had happened may be compared to both the Scandinavian figure's policy of non-intervention and the German one's taking care of things. Similarly Gunnar responds to the notion of political threat in the same way here as in the other sources, except that he does not explicitly condemn Sigurð to death; nor can we see quite how much arm-twisting is going on. There are two possible explanations for this: one is that the original scene was equally ambiguous, perhaps derived from a version resembling the Scandinavian accounts but leaving open the possibility of a radical revision by the last poet of the *Nibelungenlied*; the other, more tempting one, is that the sagaman has revised an account structured after the pattern of the *Nibelungenlied* in order to make it correspond more nearly to the Scandinavian vision of the heroes. At this stage there can be no categorical pronouncement in favour of either; we must keep them both available for re-examination in the light of subsequent evidence.

4: The murder

As we have already seen (7.6) the setting and mechanics of the murder are distinctively German, and will have been recognised both as such and as a permissible alternative to the received Scandinavian version by Norse readers. Hǫgni engineers the actual killing much as Hagen does, but with some interesting divergences in detail. The false Dano-Saxon war is peculiar to the *Nibelungenlied* and may justly be taken as an invention of the Last Poet's. His reason can only have been to enable the revelation of Sivrit's vulnerable spot by Kriemhild; after all it is more reasonable to suppose that the hero's wife may have found it out in some unspecified manner than to credit his slayer with knowledge that, as far as we know, he has no means of acquiring. Still the problem is by no means solved, because the rumoured war is a deliberate ruse by which Hagen may find out what he is not expected to know about. His own words make it clear that he already has some awareness that there is a flaw in Sivrit's armour: 'des vliuset er den lîp. I so ervar ich uns diu mære ab des küenen recken wíp' (st. 875). More famously, of course, Hagen awkwardly aims his spear at the cross that Sivrit is no longer wearing. All in all, the account in *Þiðreks saga* is rather more satisfactory, not increasing the inherent difficulty of the ancestral tale by piling complication upon complication. There is nothing to suggest that the sagaman may actually have trimmed away obscurities here.

By contrast, *Þiðreks saga* contains a scene not found in the *Nibelungenlied.* When the arrangements for Sigurð's death have already been set in motion, Brynhild beseeches Hǫgni to ensure that Sigurð will not come back alive, offering him gold and silver. His response is that with an opponent like Sigurð no guarantees are possible, but he will do his best. Such an exchange would not fit in to the epic's view of Hagen's implacable nature, where he is resolved to slay Sivrit as soon as Brünhild voices her complaint, and we are told that 'Hagen von Tronege in nie geruowen lie [...] I dône wolt' et Hagene nie des râtes abe gân' (st. 882). Nor would it be appropriate in the native Scandinavian tradition, where Gunnar himself is resolved on the job, so there would be no particular reason for Brynhild to enlist another warrior's aid, although it would be plausible that Hagen might take a bit of persuading in view of his reservations about the business. This is probably a genuine element of *Þiðreks saga*'s source, which has a different characterisation of the Hagen-figure from that used in the *Nibelungenlied.* It ties in with the speeches discussed above (8.3), where Gunnar and Hǫgni say so little that Brynhild may be

excused for doubting their intentions. This is a sign that the conversation, being of a piece with later events which show no Scandinavian affinities, has not been altered to avoid a clash with northern perceptions of the Gjúkungs, so we must discard the idea.

Other variations between the story in the saga and in the epic need no special examination. The difference between Hǫgni's delaying the wine and Hagen's misdirection of the wine is of no particular significance, and it is generally agreed that the maker of the *Nibelungenlied* has elaborated the hunt and the death of Sivrit and toned down the discovery of his body. Overall, then, it can be said that the sagaman appears to have treated his source-material for 'Dráp Sigurðar' with tolerable fidelity, perhaps encouraged by the fact that much of the tale was not entirely foreign to the Scandinavian conception, either because the Low German material was not as different from their traditions as the High German (or at least the *Nibelungenlied*) or because continental elements had already been incorporated into some Norse accounts.

8.5: The fall of the Niflungs

8.5.1: Summary

'Niflunga saga' (ch. 396-413, pp. 275-328) tells of the last stand of the Niflungs. On hearing of the death of Child Sigurð the widowed Attila sends an envoy to woo Grímhild on his behalf. Her brothers support the proposal and she accepts, but after the wedding weeps every day for her first husband. After seven years she suggests to Attila that he invite her brothers to visit. He does so, impelled by her mention of Sigurð's great treasure. Discussing the invitation, Hǫgni is sceptical of their sister's motives, but Gunnar overrules him (with a snide reference to Hǫgni's bastardy), eager to accept Attila's offer of the rule of Hunland. Their mother, Oda, tells of her foreboding dream in which she saw Hunland full of dead birds, signifying the death of many men, but Hǫgni brushes her aside saying that the decision has already been made, and her youngest son, Gíslher, also refuses to stay at home with her.

At the confluence of the Rhine and the Danube, Hǫgni meets some 'siokonor' swimming and steals their clothes. He asks them about the outcome of the expedition and they prophesy that the army will get across the river safe and sound but not one of them will return. Hǫgni puts the maidens to the sword. He then finds a ferryman, whom he induces to ply his trade by a mixture of

deception and bribery. Meanwhile the others have found a smaller boat, which capsized the first time they tried to use it. When Hǫgni arrives with the larger ship a hundred of them get in at once and Hǫgni rows them across single-handed, pulling so vigorously that the oars snap, whereupon he beheads the ferryman. Gunnar is not pleased at this, nor is he appeased by the excuse that Hǫgni did not want news of their approach preceding them to Soest (Attila's capital). The report of the sea-women's foretelling seems to quieten him, and they reach the far bank after more difficulties with the rudder.

Next Hǫgni finds Ekkivarð, Margrave Roðingeir's border-guard, lying asleep and wakes him up. Ekkivarð rides off to tell his lord all about it and Roðingeir comes to meet the Niflungs with a welcoming party. As they dry their clothes at his fire, it is seen that they are fully armed. The next day Roðingeir gives them presents: a helm for Gunnar; a shield for Gernoz; his daughter and Sigurð's sword Gram for Gíslher; and for Hǫgni, at his request, the shield of his brother-in-law Nauðung, whom Viðga slew with Mímung. His wife Guðilinda bursts into tears at the memory of her brother. Then Roðingeir leads the Niflungs to Soest, and when Attila hears of their arrival he sends Þiðrek to greet them.

On seeing her brothers Grímhild weeps once more for Sigurð and tells them so. Hǫgni tries to console her with the thought that Attila is far superior all round, but she walks out. Attila himself treats his guests with all honour. His wife asks Þiðrek, Blóðlinn and Attila in turn for aid in her vengeance, trying to entice each of them with the thought of profit, but they all refuse. Eventually she persuades Írung to her cause, and has her own son, Aldrian, hit Hǫgni, thereby provoking the Niflung to slay him. Attila calls for blood to be avenged with blood, and the battle royal starts, with Grímhild arming herself and egging on the combatants with more promises of gold and silver. Hǫgni leads many of the Niflungs in a breakout from the yard in which they have been attacked; following them Gunnar is captured, spared on the orders of Attila and then thrown into a snake-pit at the queen's behest, where he dies without further incident. Once the bulk of his people are running loose through the town Attila retreats into his hall, Roðingeir into Þiðrek's, and various other worthies on the Hunnish side take shelter likewise. At night the Niflungs burn a kitchen and attempt to incite their opponents to violence, with scant success. After dawn Gernoz slays Blóðlinn, Hǫgni and his men break into a hall and Roðingeir is roused to action. Grímhild

bids the hall be burnt and sends Írung inside to slay Hǫgni. She pays him between bouts, during the second of which Hǫgni kills him while Gíslher is doing the same to Roðingeir. Observing that his best friend is now slain, Þiðrek decides to air his grievances against the Niflungs. He gains entrance by slaying Fólkher and Hildibrand fells Gernoz, leaving the two Goths against two Niflungs, *viz.* Hǫgni and Gíslher. At this juncture Attila arrives and Hǫgni suggests letting Gíslher go free; but Gíslher dislikes the idea and is quickly killed by Hildibrand. Þiðrek and Hǫgni duel, until an injudicious exchange of insults starts Þiðrek breathing fire, so Hǫgni surrenders. Grímhild starts sticking burning brands into the mouths of casualties to make sure that they are dead. This hastens Gíslher's death. Þiðrek expresses disapprobation and executes Grímhild on Attila's suggestion. The Goth takes Hǫgni home and makes him comfortable. The Niflung has just enough time to beget a son on Þiðrek's sister and give instructions concerning him before expiring. This son, Aldrian, grows up to avenge his father on Attila by telling the Hun where the hoard of the Niflungs is buried and then burying him with it (ch. 427-28, pp. 369-74).

The closest analogue is Part II of the *Nibelungenlied* (Av. 20-39), but *Vǫlsunga saga* and the Eddas also contain valuable comparative material, and other poems from Germany and Scandinavia will also be cited. Given the well-known correspondence between the relevant sections of *Þiðreks saga* and the *Nibelungenlied* it will be most profitable to concentrate on differences. In the absence of any statement to the contrary, agreement may be assumed.

8.5.2: Attila's wooing

It should be noted that according to the *Nibelungenlied* Hagen strenuously opposes Kriemhild's marriage to Etzel, whereas in *Þiðreks saga* Hǫgni thinks it a good idea which will increase the Niflungs' power. The independent Norse evidence does not support either pattern conclusively. *Dráp Niflunga* in the Codex Regius makes the wedding a peace settlement between the Gjúkungs and Atli, with Guðrún induced to agree after (and presumably by means of) the administration of an 'óminnisveig' (l. 5). In *Vǫlsunga saga* the motivation is left unexpressed and the impetus lies with the matriarchal Grímhild. Her rôle is peculiar to Scandinavian tradition, just as Hagen is distinctively continental. There is no way to pronounce authoritatively on the matter, but it is probable that Hagen's foresighted objections are an extension of his later mistrust of the

invitation to Etzel's court, introduced here by the Last Poet as part of the amplification of Hagen's character. Certainly *Þiðreks saga* shows no sign of alteration at this point. Kriemhild's love for and grief over Sivrit is likely to have been written up as well, with her reluctance to marry Etzel emphasised to make a dramatic point. However, *Þiðreks saga* is unusual in not making Grímhild positively antagonistic to the proposal, although her response is hardly redolent of impetuous enthusiasm: 'hvn seger at ho*n* þorer eigi at neitta attila k*onunge* ser til manz' (ch. 396, p. 277). No conclusion can safely be drawn about this.

A pair of minor curiosities are that (a) not Rüedeger but Ósið[3] is Attila's ambassador for the wooing, and (b) instead of sending for his bride Attila comes and gets married in Niflungaland. Again not much can be made of this, and we must simply conclude that German tradition varied, even between two redactions of a single putative source.

Once we reach the treacherous invitation, however, certain variations may be significant. Etzel is not noted for greed, and his invitation to his in-laws is given out of sheer courtly consideration for his wife's wishes, nor does he add any spurious reason for them to come. Attila, however, is incited by the thought of Sigurð's hoard, as is the Atli of the Eddas and *Vǫlsunga saga*, and he offers the Niflungs rule over his land, much as Atli appears to offer territory to the Gjúkungs in *Atlakviða* st. 5. It looks as if either the Scandinavian view of him as a villain has affected the portrayal in *Þiðreks saga* or there are considerable divergences between north and south German versions as reflected in the saga and the epic. As Attila appears at various points throughout the narrative it is worth while digressing here to draw together the scattered data on him and see if any consistent picture emerges; and whether one does or not will have a bearing on our judgement of how the sagaman has dealt with him. Seeming inconsistency may be due to subtle, 'three-dimensional' characterisation or to an imperfect harmonisation of the sources. While one would hesitate to attribute any artistry to the sagaman, there is always the possibility that he realised the contradiction between the benevolent Etzel and the ferocious Atli, and sought to reconcile the two views by accommodating them both within one figure with different aspects to his personality.

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[3]Guðni spells this character 'Osið', but the MS once calls him 'Vsið' (ch. 396, p. 277), a common spelling for 'ó-'.

8.5.3: Attila

This is a convenient moment for me to point out that 'Attila' is a form hard to account for in this context. Whereas the forms 'Atli' and 'Etzel' are in accordance with regular rules of sound-changes in ON and MHG (and so is 'Ætla' in OE), I know of no way for 'Attila' to retain that form in Low German. One would expect something like *Ettel*, *Attel* or *Atla* if the name had been adopted and transmitted as usual. It looks suspiciously as if an antiquarian has been at work, identifying the legendary figure with the historical one and emending the name accordingly. Normally characters' names are transliterated into either phonetic or functional equivalents in Norse; and sometimes both, as for example 'Sigifrid þat kollomm vier Sigurd' (ch. 335, p. 94, going on to generalise the latter) and 'Velent hin*n* agæti smiðr er væringiar kalla volond' (ch. 111, p. 105, preferring the former). We have a comparable problem to the treatment of *Attila*, but yet more complex, in the choice of 'Þiðrek', as opposed to **Þéttrek* (which would be consistent with 'Þéttleif' and 'Þéttmar'), *Þjóðrek* (which is the independent Norse form, found in the Elder Edda), or even **Þeodorík* after the historians.

Curiously, the saga's Attila is not a Hun; an idea that I have found nowhere else, although I cannot confidently assert that the other texts explicitly call him a Hun. Of course that lack may be purely due to the absence of any other work telling of Attila's youth. Attila's courtship of Erka (ch. 56-83, pp. 57-73, ch. 332-36, pp. 87-105) is carried off with no overt criticism, other than her father's accusation of presumption (ch. 60, p. 59, ch. 333, pp. 89-90), and that and the stratagems to which Attila resorts are no more than topoi of such wooings and not to be taken as indications of moral odium. Attila is also sympathetic when approached by Isolde to intercede with king Salomon on behalf of earl Íron (ch. 340, p. 143). But, a cynic may say, nothing is required of him there but to write a letter. When his own interests are at stake he can be rather unpleasant; witness his reaction on learning of Valtari's escape with Hildigunn and the treasure: 'han*n* [...] skulut aptr haua fe þat allt er brot er tecit oc sua høfud Vallt*ar*a' (ch. 336, p. 107).

Something of the *fainéant* Etzel is found in the account of Attila's war with Russia (ch. 347-65, pp. 179-218). It is difficult at first to know whether Attila's flight is meant as a real character flaw in its own right or only a conventional opportunity to show off Þiðrek's bravery by contrast: 'nu flyr Att*ila* kon*un*gr með ollo*m* huna hær. [...] En þiðre*kr* af bærn bærsk nu allan þan*n*

dag' (ch. 349, p. 186). But then Hildibrand expresses contempt for him, calling him 'hinn ille hunndur Attila kongur', and although Þiðrek tells him 'seig mier æigi fleira af ydvarre ferd,' he does not rebuke him for ungenerous speech nor deny the appellation (ch. 362, p. 209). This suggests that it is justified.

Attila's most famous appearance is presiding over the fall of the Burgundians. He hardly cuts a very splendid figure in the more famous versions: treacherous in the Eddas and *Vǫlsunga saga*, well-meaning but ineffectual in the *Nibelungenlied*. 'Niflunga saga' shows signs of a mixture of traditions, which in this instance combine to produce an unusually favourable picture of Attila. When Grímhild entices him to invite her brothers by mentioning their treasure, Attila is persuaded, the narrator implies, because he is 'allra manna fegiarnastr' (ch. 397, p. 279). Yet no more is made of that until Niflung avenges his father (ch. 427-28, pp. 369-74), and Grímhild's explicit pleas for vengeance are met with the statement that 'þeir haua ekki fœrt hanu*m* gull ne silfr. En þo vill h*ann* þeim velfagna' (ch. 404, p. 304). Attila's loyalty is made clear in his words, 'hui munda ek suikia mina maga. er *þeir* hava gengit a mina tru. oc ei skalltu *þat* gera ne ein*n* maðr at misbioða þeim' (ib.), and not until Hǫgni slays his son does he cry 'Stande vpp hvner aller min*ir* men*n* oc vapne sic oc drepe niflung*a*' (ch. 406, p. 309). It is worth noting that Etzel in the *Nibelungenlied* gives no such command; the battle begins spontaneously, and the three kings 'woldenz gerne scheiden, ê daz schâden geschæhe mêr' (*NL*, st. 1967). Whether or not the audience would consider such good intentions laudable, the kings' impotence to carry them out is not to their credit. The saga's Attila is, I would argue, perfectly right to demand justice for this murder, which in itself breaks the sanctity of the guest/host relationship, and so he is acquitted of both evil intent and lack of control. (I should however acknowledge at this point that T. M. Andersson regards Attila as guilty on both counts; 'his greed is subsequently eliminated in favour of Attila the hospitable dupe, as he was portrayed in the epic source' where 'Etzel once more becomes a victim of his wife's manipulation and orders his warriors into battle just as she intended'.[4] Yet Andersson may be allowing his critical judgement to be influenced by his interest in textual prehistory. If we simply read the text at face value, as it is presented and intended to be

[4]Theodore M. Andersson, 'The Epic Source of Niflunga Saga and the Nibelungenlied', *AfnF*, 88 (1973), 1-54 (pp. 11 and 9).

received, rather than trying to separate elements from different sources, the character is a noble figure caught in testing circumstances. To accept that the battle was the result of Grímhild's plotting is not to agree that Attila is gullible. The standard heroic tale pits a person against conflicting forces, very often the guile of enemies. Far from demeaning the victim, it enables him (or her) to show his (or her) true quality. Something of that may be perceived in the Attila of 'Niflunga saga'.)

How are we to explain this uniquely uncensorious portrayal of the figure? I have already suggested that it is due to a blending of disparate elements from the two traditions, but we have a third tradition to consider: the Low German, of which this is the only surviving monument. Commentators typically refer to different sides in Attila's wars to explain contrasting views of him; High German traditions are supposed to derive from his allies, whereas the less favourable opinion of the Norse texts is blamed on his opponents, from whom the Scandinavians learned their heroic legends. But, as we have seen, both portrayals contain uncomplimentary elements. If even Attila's friends saw his faults, whence did the kinder evaluation of *Þiðreks saga* come?

Many possible explanations are available to us. The blend of tradition I mentioned above could be ancestral in Saxony; courage and ability came from the north and trustworthiness from the south, with avarice common to them both. There could be, rather than a mere duality of clashing conceptions, a whole spectrum of belief, with divergent development in each area causing the disagreements rather than mere uncritical inheritance from historically conflicting factions.

It is possible that the antiquary who settled the form of the name may have similarly remodelled the king's character to fit with his reading of the historical sources. As recounted by E. A. Thompson,[5] they appear to me to agree more with the Eddic materials than with either this saga or the continental poems; but if one knew the historians and the German epics but not the Scandinavian texts and wanted to make the legends agree with fact, one might very well produce a picture resembling that of *Þiðreks saga*. Of course the trouble is that one cannot very easily find

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[5]*A History of Attila and the Huns* (Oxford: OUP, 1948). One must never forget, however, that Thompson's view of what is historical and the materials to which he had access are certainly both different from the judgement and evidence of a scholar in the thirteenth century.

evidence of a similar treatment of other historical figures in the saga; but then, how many other historical figures are readily identifiable? Theodoric, certainly, and the saga condemns his Arianism, which is not an issue in other repositories of heroic legend, although chroniclers are familiar with it. If anything is a clear 'monkish interpolation' in the saga, this is. Fuller discussion follows in the chapter on Þiðrek, and similar ground must be covered in my examination of Erminrek before that.

I have developed the theory of a historicising editor to such an extent that one might suppose it my favoured explanation for the anomalies in the presentation of Attila. If nothing else, I think this necessary to account for the name-form, and Occam's razor would recommend that if it will do for the depiction of the character as well, then it should be made to do so. In fact for most of the saga we can be happy with the notion that somebody decided that Attila was a good and strong king, whose greatest fault was his avarice; and such an idea suits better a redactor with access to only German legend and historical sources than one familiar with the wolvish king of Norse tradition.

The one scene inconsistent with this conception of the character is the Russian war, where Attila flees and is derided by Hildibrand. That is definitely a remnant of Etzel. If the person who gave the saga its current structure also decided on the characterisation of Attila, then this is a chunk with which he was unable to deal. It is now impossible to ascertain what the difficulty was. This may have been inserted into the saga after the editor was finished with it; the value-judgement may have been too deeply ingrained for him to remove it (any competent writer could remove or modify Hildibrand's remark or give Þiðrek a stronger reply, but few modern readers can have read through the saga and retained any confidence in the writer's abilities[6]); or he may just have missed it, not doing a very thorough job. One must add that it obviously also escaped the translator.

In the saga's depiction of Attila, then, there are features which suggest that an editor (or redactor -- the distinction appears to be irrelevant here) has altered the view of Etzel traditional in German legend, but none that indicate that this was done for the sake of compatibility with how

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[6]"This conclusion is too good not to have been in the epic source, or rather, it is too good to be the saga's invention [Wisniewski 48-49].' Theodore M. Andersson, 'The Epic Source', p. 28, n. 23.

the Scandinavians saw him; unless possibly the resemblance between the two deceitful invitations in Norse. However, the link between 'Vǫll léz ycr oc mundo gefa víðrar Gnitaheiðar, [...] I oc staði Danpar, I hrís þat it mœra, er meðr Myrcvið kalla' (*Akv*, st. 5) and 'Nu liz oss sem þier mvnit vera bezt til komner at stiorna þessv riki' (*Þs*, ch. 397, p. 281) is far from self-evident. Given the consistent portrayal of Gunnar as greatly concerned with political aggrandisement, it would hardly be surprising if two authors had independently hit upon this means of motivating the journey to Hunland. *Vǫlsunga saga* combines the two forms of the false promise, with first 'ykr lezt hann bezt unna sins rikis' and then 'Nu vill hann gefa ydr valld yfir rikinu, medan þeir [synir hans] eru sva ungir, ok ann ydr bęzt at niota' (ch. 35, pp. 91-92). It is entirely possible that this is another adoption from *Þiðreks saga*; the Eddic texts have no suggestion of regency, and the compiler of *Vǫlsunga saga* may have thought (reasonably enough) that that was a more plausible idea, taking Atli's sons into consideration, than the simple ceding of territory.

8.5.4: The journey to Attila's court

The only important difference in the Niflungs' response to Attila's invitation is that the *Nibelungenlied* excises Gunnar's remark that Hǫgni's advice to him is like his father's advice to their mother. As has been mentioned already, that would not fit in the courtly *milieu* of the epic, and indeed the reference is not relevant in the given text, but it is an indubitable inheritance from continental tradition. The general tone of the conversation is the same in both sources, with (un-courtly?) jibing at Hagen inciting him to join the expedition against his better judgement. That is a peculiarity of these southerly texts; the Atli poems and *Vǫlsunga saga* give Hǫgni cause for his misgivings, in the form of a dubious message from Guðrún, but once the king has decided to go there is no question that Hǫgni might stay behind. There is general agreement between Scandinavia and the continent about the attitudes of the two men to the trip, and also about the foreboding dreams related to them by female relatives once it is too late to go back on their word.

On the other hand the elaboration of the journey is solely derived from *Diu Nôt*, we presume, and the minor deviations between saga and epic are no more than is to be expected. Thus we may assume that it is the Last Poet who keeps Hagen from murdering the water-maidens and brings forward the death of the ferryman so that it is in fair fight over the boat. He doubtless

also dispenses with the first attempt at crossing the Rhine in a smaller boat before Hagen's return and the further difficulties with the ferry. The awkwardness of having two drying scenes (ch. 398, p. 292, ch. 401, p. 298) leads some to the conclusion that two different accounts have been inexpertly welded together in the saga,[7] but that is to assume in the lost work a degree of consistency and narrative control not exhibited in any extant text of the group.

One incident, however, which is only preserved in the *Nibelungenlied* and seems quite unlike what the poet might have been expected to introduce, is when Hagen tosses the priest overboard. It sits well with his subsequent scuttling of the boat, knowing now that none of the host will return. He makes the same remark in *Þiðreks saga* after killing the ferryman, but with no ocular proof of the water-maidens' prophecy, nor does he take any action thereupon, unless we count the preceding murder. The conclusion can scarcely be avoided that the source contained at least the attempt to drown the priest and probably also the destruction of the ferry, but while the maker of the epic retained the incidents, to the detriment of the tonal unity of his work, the sagaman deleted them for no apparent reason. It may have been dangerous to risk seeming to express anti-clerical sentiments, or the man responsible may himself have been in holy orders, but that is pure speculation. Andersson declares that *Þiðreks saga* 'regularly eliminates clerical motifs' because 'die Skandinavier haben die Sagenhelden durchweg zu Heiden gemacht'.[8] That sounds fair enough, but when we read that the chaplain 'is eliminated together with all other Christian references by the saga translator'[9] it becomes evident that that explanation will not do. Andersson may only have been referring to 'Niflunga saga' (it is not clear from his text), but a sagaman who would delete Christian references because he considered them inappropriate for the Heroic Age would hardly have included the *moniage* of Heimir and the condemnation of Þiðrek's Arianism (ch. 421, p. 358, assuming that the agreement of A and B means that this was in the saga originally). Feeling the need for some episode at that point corresponding to the chaplain's

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[7]E.g. Roswitha Wisniewski, *Die Darstellung des Niflungenunterganges in der Thidrekssaga: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961), pp. 99, 110-12, followed by Andersson, pp. 34-35, n. 54.

[8]p. 32, n. 40, and p. 13, quoting Klaus von See, *Germanische Heldensage: Stoffe, Probleme, Methoden* (Frankurt: Athenäum, 1971), p. 151.

[9]Andersson, p. 30, n. 32.

misadventure he may have lifted the ferryman's death and repositioned it here, rather than the poet doing the reverse.

The attack by the Bavarians and the entertainment of the Nibelungs by Bishop Pilgerîn are certainly innovations of the Last Poet's. The next item of interest is that, whereas Blóðlinn refuses Grímhild's request for aid and she next tries her husband in vain, Kriemhild succeeds in inveigling Blœdelin to do her bidding, after she fails with Dietrich. Blœdelin then begins the slaughter, and when Dancwart bears the news of it to the hall Hagen starts it anew by beheading Etzel's son Ortliep. As A. T. Hatto points out, the phrase 'Dô der strît niht anders kunde sîn erhaben' as an explanation for 'dô hiez si tragen ze tische den Étzélen sun' (st. 1912) is entirely erroneous, and must be explained as a survival of the earlier form of the story as found in *Þiðreks saga* in which there is no preceding slaughter of the squires.[10]

8.5.5: The battle

The fact that Grímhild takes up her husband's arms in the battle bears a passing resemblance to the witness of *Atlamál* and, following it, *Vǫlsunga saga* that Guðrún fights at the side of her brothers; but the two seem unlikely to be related. While it is entirely possible that her warlike nature might be lifted out of one tradition and put to exactly the opposite use in the other, it is more probable that her character has developed in this direction independently in Germany. The connection is rather to be seen with Kriemhild's sword-wielding in the final Âventiure of the *Nibelungenlied.* After all, Grímhild does not do anything with her weaponry but merely eggs on the combatants, the rôle she also has in the German epic. Still, the argument can cut both ways; it is quite defensible to suggest that, as no use is made of the weapons, they are an obvious import from Scandinavian tradition which has not been fully integrated into the received account.

One indubitable addition from the northern legends is the death of Gunnar in a snake-pit. It is one of the most famous scenes in the cycle, appearing in pictorial representations as well as in writing, and it is hardly surprising that a Scandinavian redactor could not bear to let it go unused, especially as there was no particular need to retain his death as in the source beside that of Hagen. The assumption that the snake-pit is foreign to the continental tradition is justified by

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[10]*The Nibelungenlied*, transl. by A. T. Hatto, p. 301.

the fact that it is such a colourful incident and so beloved by the Norsemen and yet there is no graphic or literary evidence that it was ever known in Germany. On the other hand, Alexander Haggerty Krappe points out that a 'Schlangenturm' was remembered in Soest in fairly recent times, so that could anchor the incident in local tradition.[11] Yet while visitors from Scandinavia were shown the supposed site of the snake-pit, it should be remembered that this was not in Germany but in Luna.[12] Krappe himself argues that Gunnar's harp-playing reached Scandinavia from German sources relatively early,[13] but no trace of it remains in continental texts, not even *Þiðreks saga.* His reasoning that 'the *Ragnars Saga* preferred to drop it, a sure sign that to the feelings of the Norsemen it was an extraneous and disturbing element'[14] holds no water. It has not been demonstrated that the scene of Ragnar's death in the snake-pit ever included the harp, and even had it been, the proximity of Gunnar's death in *Vǫlsunga saga* might well have encouraged somebody to dissimilate the two episodes to avoid monotony. If then we have one element originating in the south (as seems reasonable if Krappe is correct in calling the harp 'not a Scandinavian instrument, but German'[15]) but disappearing thence while enthusiastically adopted by the Norse, may we not have another such in the execution by snakes? In other words, although perhaps German in origin, the incident has been naturalised in Scandinavia and there is no reason to suppose that it was contained in the Saxon source of 'Niflunga saga' if there are indications to the contrary. It occurs here in rather a perfunctory manner, as though it were obligatory but the writer lacked either the will or the ability to deal with it in customary fulness. More discussion of the death of Gunnar follows shortly, when the point at which it takes place in the *Nibelungenlied* comes under consideration.

It is impossible to decide for certain who was originally responsible for the burning of a building (a kitchen destroyed by the Niflungs or the hall in which they are beseiged ignited at the command of Kriemhild). Dietrich's dispatching of his men to make enquiries of the Nibelungs, though, is surely an alteration of Þiðrek's declared intention to give battle to the Niflungs with all

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[11]'The Snake Tower', *SS*, 16 (1940-41), 22-33, p.23.
[12]See Abbot Nikulás' pilgrim diary, in *Alfræði íslenzk: Islandsk encyklopædisk literatur: I. cod. mbr. AM. 194, 8vo.*, ed. by Kr. Kålund (Copenhagen: Møller, 1908), p. 16.
[13]p. 32.
[14]ib.
[15]ib.

his men. It does, however, seem rather odd that Þiðrek should not only spare but tend Hǫgni, who has just been his mortal enemy, whereas Hagen should be slain in the *Nibelungenlied.* The problems of this closing episode are quite complex, and will repay detailed investigation.

There can be no doubt that the *Nibelungenlied* preserves a more ancient form of the death of the Nibelungs than is found in *Þiðreks saga,* inasmuch as the king and his right-hand-man are the last survivors, although the manner and order of their deaths are likely to have been changed. It is not permissible to state axiomatically that the Scandinavian version is the authentic Germanic legend, but reasoning from a number of different angles will lead us in that direction. It seems entirely appropriate that the king and not his brother should be the original typifier of the defiant spirit and so the last to be slain. The history of the legend in Germany appears to show a building up of Hagen's rôle, which would explain why he has taken on this characteristic, whereas there is no evidence of a corresponding gradual growth of emphasis on Gunnar in Norse to suggest that he might have attracted motifs formerly associated with Hǫgni. And the beheading of Gunther and bringing of his head to show Hagen looks more like a remnant of the story that the death of one had to be proved to the other before the survivor would talk than the Scandinavian account looks like an adaptation of the German form by insertion of the widespread folk-tale motif. It may have been more repugnant to a courtly German or Austrian audience that Gunther should be slain as part of a bargain rather than in vengeance; and in *Þiðreks saga* the idea of the bargain does not survive, because the treasure is only used in passing to quicken Attila's interest, and Grímhild is only after blood. Those considerations enable the sagaman to retain both the famous manner of Gunnar's death, as in the other Norse texts, and the climactic position of Hǫgni's, as in German, because he has no need for one brother to die first by having an identifiable part of his anatomy removed.

The structure of the final battle may have required two royal Niflungs battling it out alone against the foe, and so one of the scarcely distinguishable younger brothers may have been pressed into service for *Þiðreks saga.* The differences between this account of the fight and that of the epic are somewhat curious; or rather the story in the *Nibelungenlied* would be curious in its own right even if we did not have *Þiðreks saga* for comparison. Dietrich and Hildebrant enter the hall armed to the teeth; Hagen gives them defiance, with Gunther making only a brief

contribution early in the conversation; and then Dietrich engages in single combat with first Hagen and then Gunther while Hildebrant stands looking on. It looks almost as if Gunther isn't really there at all and is only dealt with as an afterthought. Of course his speeches may have been transferred to Hagen as part of the latter's growth in significance, and it may have been beneath Gunther's dignity to duel with a commoner such as Hildebrant. Still, his place in the scene looks far from secure. That may lend support to the hypothesis that he could be easily replaced by Gíslher, or it may cast doubt on the likelihood of his being there in the saga's source. To my mind the clinching argument is that Gunnar must have a significant death, and as the snake-pit is a peculiarly Norse motif the only opening left in the original is the battle against Þiðrek and its aftermath; but that is purely a matter of personal persuasion.[16] Some problems with the theorem need to be aired, and I have no convincing answer for them. Hǫgni's suggestion that Gíslher be released is unlikely to have been invented by the sagaman, and it is quite inapplicable to Gunnar, as it cites his lack of complicity in Sigurð's death. It surely indicates that Gíslher belongs in the episode, nor is it probable that he accepted the suggestion but was sacrificed by the maker of the saga. However, it would be easy to move this exchange from a position earlier in the battle. Then there is the correspondence in pattern, that just as Kriemhild causes the death of Hagen's comrade in the last battle (by having Gunther executed) so Grímhild causes the death of Hǫgni's companion (by placing a burning brand in Gíslher's mouth). The parallelism is not very obvious, and it may be a product more of the reader's perception than of the process of composition. If we are to imagine that the sagaman created it by design, rather than just by replacing one name with the other, that goes contrary to what we have come to expect of him; he does not appear to be interested in subtle matters of artistic arrangement.

Of course the maker of the *Nibelungenlied* would not wish to let even his 'vâlandinne' do anything as crude as go round putting torches in casualties' mouths, nor would it be appropriate

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[16]For a (sceptical) survey of the pictorial representations of Gunnar's death, see pp. 184-87, 196, 201, 204 and 207 of Sue Margeson, 'The Vǫlsung Legend in Medieval Art', in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative: A Symposium*, ed. by Flemming G. Andersen and others (Odense: Odense U. P., 1980), pp. 183-211. A stone (now destroyed) from York Minster has been interpreted as also showing Gunnar in the snake-pit; see James T. Lang, 'Sigurd and Weland in pre-Conquest Carving from Northern England', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 48 (1976), 83-94; fig. 9 on p. 94, with description on p. 93.

for his Dietrich to breathe flames. But if his source matched that of 'Niflunga saga', why does the more courtly text kill off Hagen while the less courtly one lets him live and be looked after by his erstwhile enemy? Each author could have had his own reasons for changing the plot as found in the other's work. The sagaman might wish to create continuity with later developments by using the story found in both Eddas and *Vǫlsunga saga* that Hǫgni had an avenging son. Only *Vǫlsunga saga* states (or seems to state) that the child was posthumous, and that could itself be a borrowing from *Þiðreks saga*, but the idea may be ancient. On the other hand, the poet might wish to bring events to a final resting-place with the fall of the Nibelungs; or simply to avoid recording any illicit liaisons. Of course, his Etzel is innocent, so there would be no place for a son to wreak vengeance on him. Yet it is most improbable that the death of Attila would be introduced into *Þiðreks saga* if there were no tradition of it in the continental sources, so it would appear that Attila was not considered entirely guiltless of Hǫgni's death, at least by the orphan. That is an important qualification, because in the saga as we have it Attila's guilt, if any, is minimal.

8.6: The vengeance

The avenging son is found in later Danish and Faeroese ballads, but they must naturally be treated with caution as their date means that they may possibly have picked up motifs from, directly or indirectly, *Þiðreks saga* itself. That is particularly notable in the Faeroese 'Høgna táttur' of the *Sjúrðar kvæði*.[17] While the previous segments of the cycle show clearly their origins in the recognisably Scandinavian tradition, the vengeances by and on Guðrun display far greater affinities with continental accounts. For example, Artala (itself a form more like 'Attila' than any other variant) has no part in the slaying and expresses his opposition to it in the words 'sjálvur er hann tín onkarbróðir, I eg kann honum einki gera' (A III, st. 38) even after the death of his son is announced. He points out in addition that 'Tá ið teir vógu hann Sjúrð svein [...] I tá vóru Gíslar og Jarnar børn' (st. 81) -- a consideration which does not placate their sister. Just as in *Þiðreks saga* 'At raðum *grimhilldar* varu breiddar fir uttan garðz liðit nauta huðer rablautar. oc þa er niflungar

[17]*Føroya Kvæði: Corpus Carminum Færoensium*, compiled by Svend Grundtvig and Jørgen Bloch, ed. by N. Djurhus and Chr. Matras, 6 vols (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1951-72), vol. 1 (1951-63).

laupa ut af garðenum falla þeir ahuðunum. oc þar fœr margr maðr sua at h*ann* fec bana' (ch. 406, p. 309), so in the ballad Guðrun declares:

> Taka skal tríggjar aldirshúðir,
> rýða tær í blóði,
> falla so tungt á Júkagarpar,
> troyttir av miklum móði. (st. 86)

These and other such resemblances by no means demonstrate dependence of the ballad on the saga; indeed we have to infer a separate infusion of Scandinavian knowledge, and the mixture of traditions evident in the ballad may well be a new construction simply made in the same manner as *Þiðreks saga* but with no indebtedness to it. Even so, that means that we cannot use the Faeroese material as evidence for what either form of the legend might have been before it reached our sagaman. The general tenor of the táttur is in accordance with the German remains, but it is unsafe to conclude from the occurence of the posthumous son in two texts that are obvious mixtures of Scandinavian and continental material that it is a continental motif, especially as elsewhere a son for Hagen only appears in Norse. The Danish ballad of *Grimilds Hævn* makes the enquiry even more awkward, because, although it comes from Scandinavia, it can be derived entirely from German tradition: the Hafffrue and Folquard Spillemand (I am using the forms in the C version, as that is the one which contains the avenging son) are unknown to *Vǫlsunga saga* and the Eddas; and if Rancke (as the posthumous child is called here) is a Norse import then he is the only one to be found.[18] It appears to represent a yet later stage in the development of the legend, in which Attila has dropped out of sight altogether, and 'Grimild qualdis aff Hungers quide I hoss Nidings Skat wden Brod' (st. 41). Thus the poor logic of slaying Attila for a death which he opposed has finally been erased, although probably without intent.

On balance it is likely that the revenge for Hagen is originally a distinctively German addition to the story which became known in Scandinavia early enough to influence *Atlamál*, entered *Þiðreks saga* and the ballad tradition of the Faeroes (the latter possibly through the former but not necessarily), and survived in northern Germany long enough to percolate into the Danish

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[18]*Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 1, pp. 48-50.

folk-consciousness, but was no longer current in the south by the date of the *Klage* and has remained without record save in the tales of the Norsemen who adopted it.

8.7: Conclusions

In conclusion it would appear probable that in this portion of the story *Þiðreks saga* keeps close to its source. There is no convincing evidence for Scandinavian colouring having been added to the continental legend save in the description of Gunnar's death, but the received version seems to have been much closer to what was current in Scandinavia than does the version preserved in the *Nibelungenlied.* Before the tale was translated into Norse a German may have adapted it to reconcile the heroic tradition of Etzel with chronicle history. No completely satisfactory explanation is available for the divergences between the saga and the epic in the concluding scene of the fall of the Niflungs if the two do indeed derive directly, as is generally thought, from a single source. Bearing in mind the earlier suggestion of an intervening revision in the northern version, we may argue that the same alteration may have affected other aspects of the narrative, although we cannot now recover the reasoning behind it. (The deletion of the ducking of the chaplain can plausibly be attributed to the historicising editor, as interest in (monastic?) chronicles and priestly partisanship go very well together.) Further examination of the relationship between heroic legend and chronicle history will follow in a later chapter on 'Structure'.

Chapter 9: Erminrek

9.1:Introduction

The problem of Ermanaric is one of the knottiest in Germanic heroic legend. Caroline Brady devotes a book to the permutations of his story in different times and places, and the briefest mention of him can lead to much discussion.[1] His rôle in *Þiðreks saga* is anything but brief, although the significant events can be summed up briefly, and there remains much to be said despite Brady's valuable account. The points that need concern us here are that Erminrek appears in this saga as king of Rome in succession to his father, Samson, and ruler of a great empire, and that, having seduced the wife of his counsellor Sifka, he is duped in revenge into bringing about the deaths of his sons and the exile of his nephew, Þiðrek.

Ermanaric has a very mixed press in the various sources, both legendary and historical. *Þiðreks saga* accurately reflects this chaos of opinion; one can never be sure quite how much of a villain Erminrek is. There are other texts with a similarly ambivalent view of the figure, and it is appropriate to examine them as well as ones which present him more simply. The state of affairs in the saga may be authentic tradition as against artificially disambiguated accounts elsewhere, or it may result from a confused mingling of contrasting ideas in overlapping sources.

9.2: Old English

The Old English poem *Widsith* exemplifies the difficulties very appropriately and succinctly. The apposition 'Eormanrices | wraþes wærlogan' (ll. 8-9) has caused much head-scratching among commentators faced with the later praise of his generosity (89-92). Even after Chambers has pointed out that 'There is nothing inconsistent in a tyrant being a generous patron of the arts' we still see Kemp Malone trying to reinterpret 'wraþes wærlogan' as 'wrathful towards treaty-breakers' rather than 'the wrathful treaty-breaker'.[2] It is quite impossible to tell from the remainder of the text what stories the poet or his audience knew of Eormanric. The Herelingas are mentioned, but that is no clear argument that the tale of the Harlungs' murder is current. It is

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[1]Caroline Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943).
[2]Chambers, *Widsith*, p. 34; *Widsith*, ed. by Malone, pp. 29-34.

uncertain whose wife Ealhhild is, let alone whether or not, if she is Eormanric's queen, her name is to be identified with that of Swanhild.[3]

The other Old English mentions of the character are less favourable. *Deor* speaks of his 'wylfenne geþoht' (l. 22) and claims that many men wished that his kingdom should be overthrown. His power is again stressed, and we may imagine that his wealth is as renowned here as in the other catalogue poem. Reference to him immediately follows lines on Theodric, but no safe conclusions about linking of stories can be drawn from such juxtaposition. The first two sections are about Welund and Beadohild, whose tales are connected, but then comes mention of Geat and Mæthhild, which is only illuminated by some later ballads and shows no evidence of ever having been organically grouped with any other story. Thus the two allusions to Gothic kings may have reference to the same story-cycle, or they may not.

I have already discussed the more enlightening (but still baffling) reference in *Beowulf* (ll. 1197-1201) in connection with Hama/Heimir. If, as seems probable, Hama is to be understood as having stolen the 'Brosinga mene' from Eormenric then that may be another link in the connection of riches and ferocity -- and riches are necessary for generosity, upon which in turn power depends. Much depends on the force of the word 'searoniðas' (1200). It is later used of the dragon's hostility (3067), and the dying Beowulf asserts that he 'ne sohte searoniðas' (2738), so it may have a condemnatory tone; but unless we give the Geatish king the lie there must be two distinct senses, as the mention of the dragon is in a statement that Beowulf 'biorges weard I sohte searoniðas'. Indeed in Beowulf's account of his swimming contest with Breca 'searoniðas' seem positively praiseworthy, as he comments that he has never heard such reported of Unferth, thereby continuing to put him down and beginning his full frontal assault. So Eormenric's 'searoniðas' need not be part of a bad reputation. In his introduction to *Deor* Malone is carefully neutral in rendering the word as 'hostility', but there is an interesting air of certainty about his paraphrase of 'geceas ecne ræd' as 'he died'.[4] He goes on to say that 'The grimness of the humour is obvious,' but it is only obvious from his own version of the sentence. It is far from obvious that

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[3]R. C. Boer, *Die Sagen von Ermanarich und Dietrich von Bern* (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1910), puts forward a satisfactory equation of the *Svan-* and *Ealh-* elements (p. 16), but while establishing the possibility that the two are synonymous it does not necessitate it.
[4]Edn, p. 14.

the text means what he thinks it does, and it looks more like an obscure allusion than a telling laconism.

These Anglo-Saxon uncertainties serve to cast light only on the problem and not the solution. We know what the rest of the Germanic world was saying about Ermanaric; we have their stories of him, in sometimes overwhelming length. Mostly they agree with the picture in *Þiðreks saga*; we hear of the persecution of Dietrich and the slaying of the Harlungs, and Ermenrîch is king in Italy. He is also occasionally responsible for the death of his own son. We must beware of trying to build up a composite portrait of the figure by combining sources, because it is possible that a mixed view would falsify the development. After all, the point of the ambiguous presentation in the saga may be that it derives from an awareness of conflicting versions and does not accurately reflect any prior text. A brief survey of the surviving legends is in order.

9.3: German epics

The most extensive treatment of Erminrîch in mediæval German is probably *Dietrichs Flucht*.[5] This gives his genealogy and narrates his enmity against his nephew Dietrîch until Dietrîch has won back some of his possessions in a war disastrous for both sides. The incidents mostly match those of the corresponding portions of *Þiðreks saga*, but it should be noted that the narrator of the epic voices unqualified criticism of Erminrîch, who appears as a monster of depravity even without the assistance of Sibeche. As soon as he reports the birth the poet laments the day, because 'er der ungetriuwist was I der ie von muoter wart geborn' (2414-15); and the advent of Erminrîch's son Friderîch elicits further condemnation of the father, because he sends Friderîch 'ze der Wilzen land' (2460). The lines 'nû seht wie er sîn triuwe brach I an sînem liebem kinde!' (2462-63) suggest that we are about to hear of this treacherous deed, but no further details are given in the rest of the work, so unless the Wilzen had an exceptionally bad reputation at the time, such that even sending anyone there was despicable, the audience must have been quite familiar with what the father had them do to his son. It seems reasonable to conclude that a tale agreeing with that told in *Þiðreks saga* about Friðrek's demise must have been current in the same

[5]*Deutsches Heldenbuch*, 2, ed. by Ernst Martin (1866), 55-215.

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circles as *Dietrichs Flucht*; but it looks as though the evil genius therein was Erminrîch himself and not his wicked counsellor.

It is Sibeche, however, together with Ribstein, who advises Erminrîch to turn on his nephew. We are given no reason for this, and Erminrîch seems well prepared for it after disposing of the Harlungs apparently on his own initiative (2543-64). His immediate reaction is to rejoice that he has a faithful counsellor who will help him to take control of the Roman lands (2583-87). Sibeche thus looks redundant, save as a target for the vengeance of Dietrîch's supporters; legend seems very resistant to what would appear to be the obvious step of having Dietrîch kill his uncle. It is a fair supposition, though not a necessary one, that Erminrîch's character has been blackened in this tradition and that in a forerunner of *Dietrichs Flucht* Sibeche's rôle was more significant, as in *Þiðreks saga.*

Such a stage may have been preserved in the acephalous *Alpharts Tod.*[6] Here Erminrîch's typical appellation *ungetriuw* is not applied to him, but Sibeche and his advice are so called several times (stt. 71, 412, 420). Sibeche is twice blamed for the situation; once by the narrator (41) and once by Dietrîch (71). It is difficult to be sure, given that we do not see how the quarrel arose, but the concentration of criticism away from Erminrîch suggests that, though perhaps not guiltless, he is not primarily at fault. His ignominious flight may be mentioned in passing, as it helps to fill out the unadmirable character. That aspect remains constant in *Rabenschlacht,* but the later poem agrees with *Dietrîchs Flucht* in calling him *ungetriuw.*[7] It adds nothing else of importance. Nor do the other mentions in the remaining epics. *Biterolf und Dietleip* is obviously set before the falling-out of the kinsmen, so there is nothing remarkable in the followers of Erminrîch and of Dietrîch serving alongside one another (e.g. 73-88).[8] Among Erminrîch's men are the Harlungs (e.g. 62-65). Equally clearly, *Virginal* comes after the battle of Ravenna, to which it contains one allusion (st. 654).[9] The epics may offer us no more help, but German tradition may be teased out of some other records. Certain records mingle what we distinguish as legend and history; a consideration which may be especially relevant in the light of the suspicions

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[6]*Ib.*, pp. 1-54.
[7]*Ib.*, pp. 217-326.
[8]*Deutsches Heldenbuch*, 1, ed. by Oskar Jänicke (1866), pp. 1-197.
[9]*Deutsches Heldenbuch*, 5, ed. by Julius Zupitza (1870), pp. 1-200.

of historicising interference aroused by the examination of Attila in my last chapter (see above, 'The Niflungs'). Saxo Grammaticus may also be examined in this context, as Danish tradition often shows influence from Germany. Influence in the opposite direction has been detected in the German ballad known as *Koninc Erminrîkes Dôt*, but it may conveniently be studied in this section, leading in to the versions in Norse.

9.4: Chronicles

The first of the relevant chronicles is Flodoard's *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, Book IV of which mentions 'libris Teutonicis' about one Hermenricus, a former king who sent all his offspring to their death on account of the wicked advice of a counsellor of his.[10] The intrusive initial 'H' is a common enough (originally Latin) scribal error, without warrant in the vernacular, but the actual story displays kinship with German heroic tradition rather than learned history and pseudo-history. It looks very much like the hypothetical earlier stage lying behind the mediæval epics before the king's character was blackened. Of itself, however, it does not advance the argument.

The *Annales Quedlinburgenses* preserve a slightly confused account of Ermanricus, who reigned over all the Goths in the days of Martianus and Valentinianus, and is described as 'astutior in dolo, largior in dono'.[11] It is worth mentioning in passing Kemp Malone's opinion that the bad reputation of Ermanaric among modern scholars as cunning in his evil-doing is entirely due to this phrase.[12] Malone argues badly in the first place, confusing treachery with guile and making it unclear to what aspect of the charge he is objecting. He then suggests that 'dolo' was merely used to rhyme (sic) with 'dono', thus giving 'to Ermanaric's wickedness an intellectual turn'.[13] There is of course nothing intellectual in 'dolo'; the word to dispute on those terms is 'astutior'. Malone agrees that the annalist shows us 'a man at whose unnatural wickedness one can only hold up one's hands in horror' and goes on to say that 'If this was in truth the Ermanric of

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[10]Ed. by J. Heller and G. Waitz in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptorum XIII, (Berlin: Hain, 1881), p. 564.
[11]*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, V (Scriptorum III), ed. by George Heinrich Pertz (Berlin: Hain, 1839), p. 31.
[12]*Widsith*, pp. 147-48.
[13]p. 148.

German heroic tradition and not a product of the annalist's imagination, it seems odd that we find him nowhere else.'[14] It is indeed odd; for he is there to be found, at least in *Dietrichs Flucht* (see above). Be it noted that Malone makes not one reference to the German epics in this section.

After the death of his only son Frideric(us) 'sua perpetrata voluntate' the Quedlinburg Ermanricus hangs his nephews Embrica and Fritla. He likewise expels his nephew Theodoric from Verona to the domain of Attila at the urging of yet another nephew, Odoacer. Eventually, in the time of Anastasius, he dies after having his hands and feet cut off 'turpiter, uti dignus erat,' by the brothers Hemidus, Serila and Adaccarus, whose father he had slain. Here we find the two principal Ermanaric legends united, which is very unusual. German tradition tends to specialise in what may be termed 'the tyranny of Ermenrîch' (his treatment of his kinsmen), and Scandinavian versions prefer his death. The latter seems to relate more closely (although not very) to what is recorded by such historians as Ammianus Marcellinus and Jordanes, but we must not conclude from their silence that the tyranny legends are entirely unhistorical. The important point here is that the annalist cannot have derived either element directly from those primary sources; they do not tell of the tyranny, and the details of the killing are quite different from those recounted by Jordanes. It is fair to assume that the slaying of Frideric and the Harlungs (as we may call them, although the term is not used here) and the exile of Theodoric are based on vernacular stories current among the people of the annalist or of his source. However, the vengeance of the three brothers might be an entirely learned tradition and so no evidence for popular legend in tenth- or eleventh-century Germany. One need only posit one or two intermediaries between Jordanes and the *Annales Quedlinburgenses*: someone might give a less detailed version of his death, saying only that he was grievously wounded by the brothers in vengeance; this could subsequently be expanded to specify the lopping of limbs, and a father is a more obvious reason for vengeance than a sister; then the association of his downfall with the name Odoacer, in some form, could be added from folk tradition, and he might be accounted one of the slayers.

Eckehard uses these Quedlinburg annals (or a related text) in his *Chronicon Wirziburgense*.[15] That is not in itself helpful; but in his *Chronicon Universale* he repeats the

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[14] *Ib.*

stories with added (or, significantly, subtracted) details and an interesting critical attitude.[16] He refers to Jordanes, and subsequently displays familiarity with the dates and connections of the principal characters in the drama; but he also has access to popular tradition. It is perhaps surprising that he calls Theodericus's father Dietmarus rather than Theodemir, as he ought to have known the historians' version of the name, but it tells us nothing new about local tales. More noteworthy is his reference to Sarus and Ammius 'qui vulgariter Sarelo et Hamidiech dicuntur'. Clearly in his day the names and the story were current in everyday German. That may also be the source of his tacit correction to the account in the *Annales*; for here he has dropped the spurious third brother. (Of course in one authentic tradition -- that recorded in *Hamðismál* -- there is a third brother; but he has nothing to do with the actual slaying, and in any case the specific third brother mentioned in the chronicles does seem to be spurious.) After listing the chronological impossibilities of the received narrative he suggests as one explanation the fallibility of 'vulgaris opinio'. His alternative -- that we are in fact dealing with namesakes of the famous Ermenricus and Theodericus -- need not detain us, and he himself disposes of it in a convincing manner. But the first idea plainly indicates that he regards the *Annales Quedlinburgenses* as recording the opinion of the vulgar.

The *Historia*, the *Annales* and the *Chronicon Universale*, then, provide evidence of popular heroic tradition about Ermanaric, and Eckehard shows how a 'diligens inspector' might ponder the inconsistencies of legend and history. That will be useful for our consideration of how the sagaman might have been attempting to tackle the same problem. Most peculiar is the fact that something resembling the story of *Hamðismál* was plainly current in Germany in the twelfth century and then disappeared, to survive only in Scandinavia and re-emerge in *Koninc Erminrîkes Dôt*. I use the words 'disappear' and 're-emerge' advisedly; the story is not to be seen in the interval, but that does not necessarily indicate that it ceased to exist. Still, it would be strange if people knew of such a tale of Ermenrîch's death and completely failed to use it in the mediæval epics.

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[15]*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, VIII (Scriptorum VI), ed. by George Heinrich Pertz (Berlin: Hain, 1844), p. 23.
[16]*Ib.*, p.130.

9.5: Koninc Erminrîkes Dôt

The poem of *Koninc Erminrîkes Dôt* is late, found in a copy of around 1560, although the original is doubtless earlier.[17] The most cursory glance at the names will show that there has been some corruption of the tradition: besides twelve followers whose original identity can in some cases only be conjectured, 'Dirick van dem Be^{e}rne' suggests that the significance of Bern as a place-name has been forgotten (otherwise why should it take an article?), and Ermanaric has become 'de ko^{e}ninck van Armentriken'. Still there are characteristics of the story instantly recognisable to one who has read *Hamðismál*. In her edition of the Norse poem Ursula Dronke discusses the similarities of the two texts:

> The expedition is undertaken against Ermanaric because of his cruelty (*wreedicheit*, if we adopt the usual emendation). It was vital that the heroes who went to administer just punishment to Ermanaric should take with them a young lad, the son of a proud widow -- that they should not despise him for his youth or his foolishness, but invite him on the venture with honour and reward. These requirements are equally intrinsic to the tragic and to the happy version: they determine the one by being ignored, the other by being fulfilled. Other details have survived in the poetic tradition almost unchanged -- visual elements such as the avengers robing themselves in precious stuffs as they arm for the journey, and then, as they approach their destination, seeing a gallows by the roadside. Here too, as they arrive, a messenger asks Ermanaric what to do, and the over-confident king is delighted to let his adversaries in -- in order to hang them. The grim humour with which Hamðir mocks Iǫrmunrekkr and turns his welcome against himself has a certain counterpart in the ballad mode in Theodoric's playful question about the gallows the very moment before he draws his sword. And finally, Theodoric's moment of lament for Blo^{e}delinck seems a distant echo, surviving in a changed context, of Hamðir's lament for Erpr: here, as tragedy is averted, the lament turns swiftly into burlesque. Beyond the many changes and new assimilations we can glimpse certain archaic features that were poetically and dramatically indelible, features which, even when they were forgotten or ignored by the prose narrators -- such as the ominous gallows and the vivid exchange of speeches in the hall -- an oral poetry would still seize on and keep alive.[18]

I should give a brief résumé of the German ballad. Dirick wishes to drive out the king of Armentrik and asks the advice of Hillebrandt, who warns him that the king has threatened to hang them 'all two^{e}lue'. Hillebrandt's wife says that the king is to be found in Freysack and warns

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[17]*Deutsche Volkslieder mit ihren Melodien*, ed. by John Meier, vol. 1 (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1935). Meier's discussions of dates are to be found on pp. 24 and 26.

[18]*The Poetic Edda*, ed. and trans. by Ursula Dronke, vol. I: *Heroic Poems* (Oxford: OUP, 1969), p. 224.

Dirick not to attempt the expedition without Bloᵉdelinck, the twelve-year old son of a widow. The twelve heroes array themselves as dancers (if it is meant as a disguise it evidently fools nobody) and seek admission to the castle. It is granted by the king, despite the porter's misgivings, and once inside Dirick berates the king before slaying him. Only the porter is spared, because of his loyalty. For a moment Dirick fears that he has lost Bloᵉdelinck, but the boy replies from the cellars that he is alive and well and has wounded three and a half hundred men.

The main significance of this story for the study of *Þiðreks saga* is that it does not appear there. That is very peculiar; for the ballad is found in a Low German copy, Meier would have us believe that it derives from a mid-thirteenth century High German source (close in time and place to the epics), and it is very reminiscent of the Norse *Hamðismál*, a story also recorded by Bragi the Old. The Scandinavian records make it very unlikely that the tale could have been entirely unknown in the north of Germany when the originals of *Þiðreks saga* were gathered together, so we cannot explain its absence by positing a necessary time-lag between the composition of the High German poem and its reaching the Low Germans.

I mentioned above the resistance to having Dietrich kill his uncle. The king of Armentrik is not presented as Dietrich's uncle, but otherwise that step has been taken in the ballad. In the epics he does not suffer a violent death; and it may be that both traditions of his end, which appear after all in the early historians, had such vitality that they could not coexist. The distinction between epic and ballad is an important one. They are likely to have existed in different *milieux*, and what one audience might remember, especially if they had access to fixed texts in the form of written versions or trained poets, could be forgotten or confused by another, especially if their transmission was dependent on the memory of non-specialists. The canonical versions of the relationships between Theodoric and Ermanaric among the upper classes might be irrelevant to the common people. That may be the force of Eckehard's 'vulgariter' and 'vulgaris opinio'. He may be meaning not just 'vernacular' and those who are not scholarly historians' but precisely 'the common people' -- those who would preserve such ideas as are to be found in *Koninc Erminrîkes Dôt*.

9.6: Saxo

In his eighth book, Saxo Grammaticus presents Jarmerik as the son of Sivard, a king of the Danes after the battle of Bråvalla.[19] The reflection that this accurately represents neither history (for of course Ermanaric died centuries before the birth of Harald Wartooth) nor legendary tradition (nowhere else is the figure associated with Denmark) should introduce a note of caution into our consideration of Saxo's account. The general consensus is that he knew the context to be false but merely lifted an extant story to add an illustrious name to the roll of Danish kings. Saxo's fondness for contemporary applicability as well as the altered geography of the tale is likely to have affected his treatment of the source, leading him to match certain details with aspects of current events, as discussed below.

Saxo, uniquely, preserves a story of Jarmerik's youth in which the prince is captured in battle and enslaved by the Slavs; he works his way up to an honoured place at court and eventually engineers a bloody escape. The fact that no other text has any mention of such an adventure prompts the idea that this is an original embellishment by Saxo; especially as it is so much in character with so may episodes in his history. It can never be proven, but the probability is strong. Returning from exile, he takes over the governance of the kingdom from his uncle Buthli, his father Sivard having orchestrated his own death in battle after a disastrous Slavic war. Davidson remarks that 'The suggestion that Sivard took his own life rather than lose his reputation could have been suggested by the tradition in Ammianus Marcellinus that Ermanaric committed suicide to avoid defeat by the Huns.'[20] It would certainly provide a useful way of combining the two versions of his demise by attributing the self-inflicted death to another king in close proximity and keeping the famous mutilation scene for the celebrated sufferer. However, the association is not clear enough for us to use as evidence for Saxo's treatment of his sources.

The name of Sivard's brother, Buthli (Lat. *Buthlus*), is interesting. It is much better known as the name of Atli's father in Scandinavian tradition; Etzel's father in German bears the doubtless related name of Botelunc. The return of the rightful heir from exile shows a passing resemblance to the return of Theodoric, regaining control from his own uncle Ermanaric. One

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[19]Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, trans. by Peter Fisher, ed. by Hilda Ellis Davidson, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer; Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979-80); 1, pp. 253-58, 2, pp. 137-40, nn. 104-26.
[20]2, p. 137, n. 106.

wonders if Saxo has taken a few names and themes from the Theodoric cycle and added them in to this section of his history simply to pad out the narrative.

Jarmerik embarks on a reign of notable savagery. He is recorded as hanging forty Slav prisoners of war, his own nephews who have rebelled against him, and their nobles, and almost having his son Broder hanged. Further executions involve the imaginative use of domestic animals and could all have been derived from the Swanhild legend, although they are not unparalleled in the annals of other ancient and mediæval rulers.[21] Hanging appears as a habit of Ermanaric's in various sources, and the report that Knud Lavard treated Slavs in a manner reminiscent of Jarmerik need only suggest that Saxo chose to reflect his historical hero in a legendary figure whose characteristics are appropriate. It is only after Bikki installs himself as Jarmerik's counsellor with an eye to avenging his own brothers that the king takes action against his kin, but as presented by Saxo the execution of the Harlungs is quite justifiable. He locates them in Germany, and the incident has surely come to him thence.

The next action, though, is Scandinavian in its affinities. His son, Broder, is falsely charged with incest with his stepmother by Bikki, and a mock-hanging is staged, with servants holding up the victim until their arms grow weary and the noose tightens as they let him down, while Svanhild is trampled to death by horses. The delayed hanging is found only in Saxo, and is probably an innovation of his own, although some have pointed to the mock execution of Vikar in *Gautreks saga* and Saxo's Book VI. Here it allows Jarmerik to relent when he sees Broder's falcon plucking out its own feathers, whereas in *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Skáldskaparmál* Randvér plucks the bird and Jǫrmunrek repents too late. The difference in name between the two accounts of the king's son is curious, though a minor point. No entirely satisfactory explanation has been advanced. It may be due to the synonymy of *rand* and *borði*, the latter of which could have been metathesised and then assimilated to *broddr*, assisted by the frequent association of shields and spears.

The final act is idiosyncratic, but resembles the account in *Hamðismál* and related works more than anything else. Vengeance by the brothers-in-law for their slain sister; their initial success counteracted by the advice of Óðin to pelt them with stones; the mutilation of the king:

[21] *V. id.*, p. 138, n. 111 for further details.

these are all familiar in Scandinavia. Even Guðrún remains, although here an unrelated witch whose contribution is to blind Jarmerik's men and turn them against each other. Clearly, though he had access to German tradition, Saxo could not resist the Norse view of Ermanaric's death. That is what we would expect of any Scandinavian redactor, so popular is the story; and it would tie in with the practice of the sagaman elsewhere in *Þiðreks saga.*

9.7: Norse versions

Besides the German accounts, there are also Norse versions of the legends to consider. It is entirely certain that the tale of Jǫrmunrek was current in the north by the time of *Þiðreks saga*, so just as the sagaman has demonstrably used other Scandinavian parallels in the course of his work he may also have made use of material such as *Hamðismál.* Of course that story does not appear in the saga, but elements of its depiction might be imported into other incidents. The king's fondness for hanging, in particular, is characterised by Brady as peculiarly Óðinnic; and as he is associated with Óðin in Norse but not in German she argues for Scandinavian influence here.[22] The trouble with that, of course, from our point of view, is that if such influence is to be supposed in the continental tradition it may be impossible to separate out what had reached Germany before the making of the saga and what is attributable to the sagaman.

It should be noted that the saga uses the name-form 'Erminrek' and not the naturalised 'Jǫrmunrek'. For other heroes that we know to have been celebrated in Scandinavia we normally find here the Norse forms, as the normal usage, such as 'Sigurð' and 'Gunnar', or as an alternative, such as 'Vǫlund'. As pointed out in the previous chapter (8.5.3), 'Attila' and 'Þiðrek' are exceptions; and 'Erminrek' is a comparable problem. It is in fact just about as faithful a representation of 'Ermenrích' as the Norse phonological system will allow. ('Ermenrík' would have been closer, and indeed the spelling 'Ermenrik' is often found in the saga. For the spelling with 'e' one may compare such names as 'Gautrek' and 'Heiðrek', which could have established the '-rek' suffix as a norm.) 'Grímhild' is treated in a similar manner; and while the reason in her case may be that the German and Norse forms are so different that changing the one to the other would be altogether too much editorial freedom -- a completely different name rather than merely

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[22]*Legends of Ermanaric*, pp. 219-21; *cf.* p. 103.

a different pronunciation -- another suggestion may be put forward to explain both at once. The deeds of Kriemhild cannot be reconciled with those of Guðrún. Each marries the Sigurd-figure and is the sister of the Burgundians; but their actions in the *Nôt* are so contrasting as to belong to two different people. This is more evident in the legends concerning Ermanaric, because the Scandinavian tradition simply does not overlap with the continental. The Norse texts remember him for the attack of Hamðir and Sǫrli, which does not figure in the German epics. In Germany his prime function is as the tyrannous uncle of Dietrich, a rôle of which the skalds record nothing. There was then no reason for the sagaman to identify Jǫrmunrek with Ermenrîch, so he is unlikely to have transferred Scandinavian ideas to the continental figure. We may therefore imagine that any Norse attributes of the saga's Erminrek are attributable to the Low German original.

Chapter 10: Þiðrek

10.1: Introduction

It may seem curious to devote a single chapter to the titular hero of the whole vast saga, but of course not all of the text is specifically concerned with Þiðrek himself, and some of the main events in his biography are dealt with in my preceding chapter on the legends surrounding Erminrek. In addition, the indigenous Scandinavian stories say very little of any character who can be identified with him, so that the probability of any direct influence is diminished, and it will be the main purpose of this chapter to establish whether or not any significant overlap would be perceived by the sagaman and if so whether or not any accommodation of the one to the other can be traced. Of particular importance also is the question of how much connection there might be between the legendary and historical Theodoric. The English evidence is valuable for that, as well as trying to make out what might lie behind the (to say the least) sparse references in Norse by means of what can be traced behind the English allusions.

One of the main problems in dealing with Theodoric legends is the fact that there are two important Theodorics: the Ostrogoth and the Frank. This might not cause anybody any difficulty save for the similarity between the story of Dietrich von Bern and that of Wolfdietrich. The two have indeed been thought to have influenced each other. While it is obvious that *Þiðreks saga* concerns itself with the former, one important piece of evidence for Scandinavian knowledge of Theodoric is quite ambiguous. Though most scholars accept the **thiaurikR** of the Rök stone as referring to the Goth, Kemp Malone has argued forcefully for its interpretation as meaning the Frank.[1] While this may seem only distantly related to the saga, I shall discuss the inscription, as it will help to show the network of legendary awareness, particularly in combination with *Deor*.

10.2: The Rök stone

The runic monument from Rök in East Götaland includes a passage quoted in the following form by Malone (except that I represent his hooked a as a):

þat sakum anart, huaR fur niu altum an

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[1]Kemp Malone, 'The Theodoric of the Rök Inscription', repr. in *Studies in Heroic Legend and Current Speech*, ed. by Stefán Einarsson and Norman E. Eliason (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959), pp. 116-23 (p. 116).

urþi fiaru miR Hraiþkutum auk tumi iR an ub
sakaR:
raiþ ÞiaurikR hin þurmuþi, stiliR flutna, strantu
Hraiþmarar; sitiR nu karuR a kuta sinum,
skialti ub fatlaþR, skati Marika.[2]

Scholars usually regard this as a description of an equestrian statue found in Aachen, whither it was taken from Rome, where it was originally designed as a portrait of a Roman emperor but later became regarded as representing Theodoric the Goth. While accepting that the Germanic viewers in Aachen would have associated it with Theodoric, Malone reckons that those who had come into contact with the Frankish king of that name would assume that he was the Theodoric intended. As he points out, although neither king is reputed as having invaded the Hraiðgoths, the Franks did battle with invading Geats, who have been plausibly connected with the Hraiðgoths. He cites Bugge's discussion of the name, but also acknowledges that Bugge subsequently preferred to equate 'Hraiþkutum' with the OE 'Hreðgotan,' meaning Ostrogoths. That would make 'ÞiaurikR' beyond question the Ostrogothic king. The key to the interpretation is the word 'Marika.' Malone relates it to Meran, where the *Kaiserchronik* places Wolfdietrich's exile. He agrees that a link is also to be suspected with 'Theodoricum vero, regem Mergothorum et Ostrogothorum' in the prologue to Notker's *Boethius*. However, he regards that as an import from the story of Theodoric's namesake, insisting that the Mærings of Meran are central to the Wolfdietrich tale whereas the Mergoths are peripheral to the account of Dietrich von Bern. Yet the Mærings of Meran are a conflation of two sources, only one of which is certainly connected with Wolfdietrich, whereas none of the other versions mention them; and the Mergoths are also found in only one source and equally firmly connected to the Ostrogoth. Malone goes on to construct a hypothetical version of the Wolfdietrich legend in which the hero's exile is situated among the Mærings or Mergoths, i.e. Visigoths; the name 'Mæring' would then have been interpreted as having to do with Meran, and the scene of the exile laid there accordingly. This conjecture is flawed by Malone's characteristic fault of intemperate ingenuity. It is not good practice to take one isolated version among many and construct a completely unattested version supposedly lying behind a mistake in it to explain the occurence of a similar feature in an equally isolated version among many of a related story. If we believe that Bugge's later treatment of

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[2]p. 16.

'Hraiþkutum' is an improvement on his first, and therefore that the 'skati Marika' is properly the Ostrogoth rather than the Frank, we could no doubt devise an equally reasonable form of the original story which would limit the mistaken analogy to the Wolfdietrich story and not require us to regard as 'wrong' the story which preserves the 'correct' assumptions. However, it is nonetheless possible that Malone is right; I regard his case as unproven rather than disproven.

10.3: Old English mentions

The fourth section of *Deor* is normally considered in conjunction with the Rök stone. The Old English poem says simply that 'Ðeodric ahte þritig wintra I Mæringa burg; þæt wæs monegum cuþ' (18-19). This seems to be the mid-point in a list of misfortunes passed away -- the captivity of Welund, the pregnancy of Beadohild, the sleepless sorrowful love of Geat and Mæthhild, the tyranny of Eormanric and Deor's own ousting in favour of Heorrenda -- so it is normally interpreted as referring to a misfortune, and most ingenious solutions have been devised. These include 'Mæringa burg' being a place of exile, the thiry-year reign being marked by injustice, and it being a regrettably short period. The last seems intrinsically implausible, but it may be compared with the more reasonable approach of W. F. Bolton, who notes that the poem's refrain, 'Þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg,' does not necessarily indicate that fortune will change for the better; merely that it will change.[3] A thirty-year reign is still transient. However, though we cannot say for certain about the Geat and Mæthhild story, and the autobiographical section is evidently informed by the foregoing instances, it looks as if the others all have happy endings after the state of misery described: Welund escapes and exacts vengeance; Beadohild bears the hero Widia; and Eormanric dies. Therefore it is probable that the same pattern applies to the Theodric example, and we should be seeking interpretations that make his possession of the city a misfortune. Bolton's Boethian hypothesis would lend support to the idea that Theodric is here remembered as a tyrant, but there are significant differences between all the other allusions (as far as we can ascertain), and it is strange to suppose that the poet would simply juxtapose two examples of evil rule. The exile theory also has its faults, but it is the most convincing of those that I have seen proposed. 'Mæringa' and the Rök stone's 'marika' are doubtless to be identified. If

[3]See Whitney F. Bolton, 'Boethius, Alfred, and *Deor* Again', *Modern Philology* 69 (1971-72), 222-27, especially 224.

the Mærings be Theodoric's Ostrogoths, then 'Mæringa burg' is surely Ravenna and we cannot be dealing with Theodoric's thirty years away from it. But it could be Meran, in which case Malone must be right in regarding Theodric as the Frank. The likelihood that exile is in fact meant is not, however, strong enough for us to regard the case as proven.

Many Old English readers must have known the Ostrogothic king through the *Consolatio* of his victim Boethius. The theory that *Deor* regards him as a tyrant gains support from the widespread condemnation in King Alfred's translation.[4] In the added introduction it is pointed out that 'he wæs cristen, þeah he on þam arrianiscan gedwolan þurhwunode' (p. 7); but subsequently such balance disappears. He is 'se wælhreowa cyning' (*ib.*), and his will is 'þæs unrihtwisan cyn[*in*]ges' (p. 62). He is paired with Nero as exemplifying '*þam eallra wyrrestan* men [...] *þam þe his eallra unweorðost bið*' (p. 34). The metrical paraphrase of the introduction is sterner than the prose about his heresy and represents Theodric's welcome by the Romans as a false hope:

> he þæt eall aleag:
> wæs þæm æþelinge Arrianes
> gedwola leofre þonne Drihtnes æ. (p. 152)

It is interesting to note that the introduction finds it necessary to state that 'Ðeodric wæs Amulinga' (p. 7). This could mean that the audience would not know that Theodric was an Amuling, or it may be specifying which Theodric is under discussion -- 'You know, the Amuling.' The verse gives us no help, saying merely 'Ðeodric Amuling' (p. 153).

The one uncontestable reference to Theodric the Goth in Old English heroic writings is in *Waldere* II 4-10, where he is represented as having intended to give a sword to Widia after the latter released him 'of nearwum [...] ðurh fifela ge[wea]ld' (ll. 8, 10). We cannot certainly infer any close connection between him and the actors in the fragments, so all that may safely be said is that we have a rescue story which, in combining Widia and monsters, is reminiscent of various tales of Dietrich in the German epics. Lacking further details, we cannot tell if it could be considered a version of the same story.

Equally uncontestable is the conclusion that when *Widsith* tells us that 'Þeodric weold Froncum' (24) we are dealing with Theodoric the Frank. The second mention of Theodric in the

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[4]Ed. by Sedgefield.

poem, though, is disputed. Occurring in a section of the poem dealing, apparently, with the innweorud Earmanrices' (111), line 115 reads 'Seccan sohte ic *ond* Beccan, Seafolan *ond* Þeodric.' It is generally accepted that the names in *Widsith* are grouped with an eye for a story in which they appear together, so the identification of this character is dependent upon that of his companions. Unfortunately, equally plausible suggestions have associated them with both the Goth and the Frank. Seafola is normally thought to be the same as the German Sabene; but Dietrich von Bern has a faithful retainer called Sabene von Rabene, and Hugdietrich a faithless counsellor called Sabene. Wolfdietrich is saved by Berhtunc, whose name may have the same origin as Becca's, but 'Becca' is also similar to 'Bikki', Jǫrmunrek's evil adviser. A Becca rules the Banings in line 119 of *Widsith*, where he comes between Eormanric and Gifica, giving him possible East Germanic connections. Malone, unusually, provides a possible original for Secca, *viz.* Sigiwald, in his opinion the original of Wolfdietrich.

From all these considerations of the Old English material we can conclude that the only heroic record which certainly testifies to the fame of Theodoric the Ostrogoth is *Waldere*, a possibly late work which may be based on newly imported continental material rather than ancient Anglo-Saxon tradition (see above, 'Valtari'). *Widsith* is entirely ambiguous, but if its second Theodric is the Goth then that may be evidence for a story involving the loyal Sabene. As for *Deor*, it is also dubious, but any reference to the Amelung could be derived entirely from the learned tradition reflected in King Alfred's Boethius.

10.4: Scandinavian appearances

Having cast doubt on the existence of any legendary tradition of Theodoric outside the continent, we must look at his appearance in Norse records other than *Þiðreks saga*. I have only located him in *Guðrúnarkviða* III and the prose introductions to that and to *Guðrúnarkviða* II. The prose sections could both be derived entirely from the contents of *Guðrúnarkviða* III, so the poem must be our evidence. Its status may be questioned by the fact that it is reflected in neither *Vǫlsunga saga* nor Snorri's *Edda*. Those two may be reasonably thought to have presented between them the generally accepted view of events in thirteenth-century Scandinavia. Admittedly they lay less stress on the lyrical and elegiac aspects than on action, so they may have

known *Guðrúnarkviða* III despite their silence; but that in itself should arouse suspicion. Why should a new heroic male character be introduced only in a lament rather than in a narrative poem? It looks as if he is new not only in the order of occurence but also in the order of composition.

If Þjóðrek is indeed an innovation in *Guðrúnarkviða* III, then it is entirely likely that he has been brought in from knowledge of the German legends, and quite possible that *Þiðreks saga* itself is the source. The form of the name is a problem, though, for that hypothesis. It is not improbable that a Scandinavian story-teller would have understood the German element 'diet-' and translated it straight as 'þjóð-', whereas it would be rather more difficult to get to that from the saga's 'þið-'. It is hard to see on any hypothesis why *Þiðreks saga* should have adopted that name-form for its hero. Presumably the original would have had the correspondence found in MHG between 'Dietrich', 'Diether', 'Dietmar', and 'Dietleip', but, while the Norse keeps the last two parallel as 'Þéttmar' and 'Þéttleif', 'Þether' differs slightly and 'Þiðrek' considerably. Maybe the names developed differently in Low German, but that only pushes the problem back one stage. This may in fact be the best evidence for an independent Scandinavian tradition of the character, in which his name might have gained a distinctive form, used by the sagaman in this assembly of German tales but otherwise unrecorded.

Whatever we make of this particular philological difficulty, the overall problem of Þiðrek is clear. The harder we look at possible analogues for Dietrich outside historical or continental sources, the fewer we find. It seems that the initial idea of the great hero celebrated throughout the Germanic world is illusory. The English certainly knew of him, but apart from through Boethius only, as far as we can tell, through a poem which there is no reason to suppose was not an adaptation of a German original and so testimony to the spread of foreign tradition rather than to heroic legends about him flourishing elsewhere than on the Continent. As for the Scandinavians, it would be reasonable to expect some evidence to survive, given the mass of heroic literature extant in Norse, if he had been famed before *Þiðreks saga* began circulation. There being no such evidence we must assume that there were no stories of the figure current and available to influence the sagaman's treatment of Þiðrek in the saga.

Chapter 11: Structure

11.1: Introduction

The structure of *Þiðreks saga* may not seem directly relevant to the affinities of the forms of the legends contained in it, but it is important to that question. If the slight indications pointed out in previous chapters are sufficient reason to suspect that the stories may have attained their current shape or come closer to it at the hands of an editor rather than merely of a translator, then it is clearly of interest to try and establish the likely provenance of that editor. If we can show that there is a good precedent for a compilation of this kind in Germany but not in Scandinavia, or vice versâ, we can propose with a fair degree of confidence that society as the environment in which the tales were gathered together; and it would be reasonable to suppose that any internal alterations which cannot definitely be assigned to Norse influence were carried out at the same time.

11.2: Possible hypotheses

The following may be considered the chief possibilities. (1) The saga is a translation of a German work, in prose or verse, or perhaps a mixture of the two, which comprised a wide selection of texts associated with Dietrich, some emended for the sake of consistency but others left with their contradictions; the translation has merely added a prologue and a few obvious glosses. (2) The saga is based on a manuscript collection of poems from the Dietrich cycle and the Norse sagaman has worked the originally independent episodes into a whole, with varying degrees of success. (3) A Norse author deliberately went in search of German legends about Dietrich, which he had the idea of turning into a compendious saga.

Various refinements of the above are possible. It is probable that once the saga had been made in one of the suggested ways it was subject to a continuing process of revision at the hands of its copyists, and we cannot rule out the likelihood of a large-scale reworking by a subsequent redactor. Indeed T. M. Andersson suggests (if it is not merely my inference) that the well-known repetition of 'Vilkina saga' is due to just such a scribal redaction being only half-completed.[1] That

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[1]'An Interpretation of *Þiðreks saga*', in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism of Edda and Saga Narrative*, ed. by John

would corrupt the data for option (1) and confuse (2) with the additional possibility that *Þiðreks saga* is in fact derived from a collection of Norse translations of Dietrich texts with no attempt at unification. Still, the simplest process and the likeliest to yield results is to seek out parallels for all the three main suggestions.

10.3: German unitary text

10.3.1: Overall

Obviously there exists no Low German account of Dietrich that bears any resemblance to the saga, but that does not imply that none ever existed. Very little Low German from the twelfth or thirteenth century survives. We have large quantities of High German from this period and it does not look like *Þiðreks saga* either, but the literary cultures of northern and southern Germany may have been very different indeed. Andersson proposes pushing back the date of the saga to nearer 1200 than 1250 on the grounds that if the *Nibelungenlied* had been available it would have been used in preference to the 'Ältere Not';[2] but we have no way of knowing that the *Nibelungenlied* would have reached Saxony by the time the compilation was made and that it would automatically force the 'Not' out of circulation.

There may be no Low German parallels for such a compendium of Dietrich legends, but commentators have concluded from internal evidence that *Þiðreks saga* is based on a pre-existent compilation, probably originating in Soest. The most recent survey of it along those lines of which I am aware is the article by Theodore Andersson which I have already cited twice in this chapter. Looking at earlier scholarly opinions on the provenance of the work, he points out that the arguments of W. E. D. Stephens in his unpublished M.A. thesis 'An Examination of the Sources of the Thidrekssaga' lead to the conclusion that next to nothing is a Scandinavian addition in the stories which Stephens has examined.[3] Andersson then suggests that this weakens the case for

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Lindow, Lars Lönnroth and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, The Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), pp. 347-77 (p. 371).

[2]p. 356.

[3]p. 350. See Stephens' own remark that 'We have found no evidence to show that the Norwegian author added any material of his own invention or anything from Scandinavian sources, except a few insignificant motifs in the Sigurd story' (p. 188).

Norwegian authorship.[4] To this he adds the positive conclusions of Heinrich Hempel, who found ample evidence for Saxon input into the saga.[5] After a generalised overview of *Þiðreks saga*'s distinction from the body of *fornaldarsǫgur* and *riddarasǫgur*, Andersson examines the use of the word *riddari* in the saga and finds it corresponding to (a) twelfth-century German usage rather than later, and (b) a generic distinction between bridal quests and more heroic tales. This too he regards as evidence for a close adherence to a German text. He goes on to draw the same conclusion from the Sigurð and Niflung material 'if this portion of the book is a fair sample'.[6] If anything has emerged from the current study, it is that no one portion of the book is a guide to the sagaman's practice in other sections, but we may give harbour to Andersson's idea that the amount (if not the nature) of intervention is reasonably constant. His last piece of evidence from the text itself for German origin is a passage in the prologue supporting the reported marvels in the tales against the scorn of unbelievers (pp. 6-7), for which there is an exceptionally close German parallel. This is an appropriate point at which to go into more detail on that subject, as the prologue, besides being a part of the framework, also discusses the structure.

10.3.2: Prologue

It is unclear what relationship it has to the main body of the text: whether it derives wholly or in part from a German original, is the work of the Norse redactor, or has been added by a later scribe. The problem is confounded by the fact that the prologue only appears in the later paper MSS, Mb lacking the beginning of the work until the start of ch. 34 (p. 44); but at the very least the writer of the prologue must certainly have been closer than we to the date of the saga's composition and had greater opportunity to examine the contemporary heroic traditions.

'Þesse sagha', says the prologue, 'er ein af þeim stærstum søghum er gerfuar hafa verit j þyverskri tunnghu' (p. 1). That would seem to suggest that the saga is a translation of a German original, and indeed Heiko Uecker has assembled stylistic evidence confirming that impression,

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[4]p. 351.

[5]'Sächsische Nibelungendichtung und sächsischer Ursprung der Þiðrikssaga' in *Edda, Skalden, Saga: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Felix Genzmer*, ed. by Hermann Schneider (Heidelberg, 1952), pp. 138-56; rpt. in his *Kleine Schriften*, ed. by Heinrich Matthias Heinrichs (Heidelberg, 1966), pp. 209-25; cited by Andersson, p. 351.

[6]p. 357.

or at least indicating grammar that is not normal 'good Norse' and might be attributable to a German exemplar if we knew the Low German prose norm of that period.[7]

Later the prologue suggests a method of composition quite different from taking an existing book and translating it, or (from a German perspective) setting out tales already known as a unity: 'þesse sagha er samansett epter søgn þydskra manna, enn sumt af þeirra kuædum' (p. 2). This might be the speculative comment of a later scribe, deduced from examination of the text and so with no greater weight than our own theories, but the subsequent remark that 'þo ath þu taker einn mann vr hverre borg vmm allt Saxland þa munu þessa søghu aller aa eina leid seigia' (ib.) suggests some knowledge of the facts. It might be the case that the writer tried the experiment and is speaking from personal experience; it is at least unlikely that he would make such a claim if he felt it could easily be disproved. It creates a very clear picture of how the saga might have been put together; a picture that Andersson describes scornfully as 'a proto-folkloristic procedure' and considers intrinsically much less likely than the translation of written sources.[8] But if the prologue-writer does mean that the materials were collected orally then Andersson's argument merely pushes back the collection to a German in Germany instead of a Norwegian in Bergen; and *a priori* the idea of such a seeking of tales seems more likely among foreigners than among one's own people, for anyone carrying out such a project would probably be well acquainted with his native traditions -- and whoever put the saga into the form in which we have it was certainly knowledgeable about the legends of the Scandinavian people. Additionally, there was a certain amount of concubinage between Hanseatic merchants and local women of Bergen, and one could well imagine the offspring of such relationships being educated in the stories of their fathers' land with such a work as *Þiðreks saga*.[9] Without being so specific as to insist on Bergen concubines, the ample contact that is known to have existed between the two cultures should be sufficient to explain Norse interest in German traditions.

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[7]'Was ist nordisch an der Þiðreks saga?', paper delivered to the symposium 'Hansische Literaturbeziehungen. Das Beispiel der Þiðreks saga und verwandter Literatur' on the 20th of November, 1992, at Bonn University; to be published in the forthcoming proceedings of that symposium, ed. by Heinrich Beck and Susanne Kramarz-Bein (Berlin and New York), in the series Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde.

[8]p. 366.

[9]This point was made in discussion of another presentation at the Bonn symposium, 'Norwegen und das Reich unter König Hákon Hákonarson (1217-1263)' by Thomas Behrmann.

Alternatively, the writer may have meant no more than that there was ample support for the saga's version of events. But the remainder of his claim to accuracy is couched in very characteristically Norse terms, depending on 'þeirra kuædum er skemta skal rikumm monnum og fornort voro þegar epter tiþindum sem seiger j þessare søghu', and after the comment about the consistency of Saxon tradition 'enn þui vallda þeirra hin fornu kuæde' (p. 2). In the words of Michael Curschmann:

> he is in fact thinking in terms of Icelandic-Norwegian literary tradition and contemporary literary practice. It is from this background that he derives the idea of claiming truth and relevance for the German poetic sources of the saga -- a claim that no *clerc* on the continent would want or dare to make given the fact that regular historians, from the anonymous author of the *Kaiserchronik* in the twelfth century to Aegidius Tschudi in the sixteenth, had nothing but scorn for such fables and poetic lies.[10]

That this section of the prologue is not (or not entirely) from a German original should also be clear enough from the comparison of 'þeirra kuedskapur' to 'kuæda hattur [...] j vorre tunngu' (p. 2). Unless the references to verse be taken as interpolations and the rest considered original, then the 'proto-folkloristic procedure' must be taken as a Norseman's perception, and its suggestion of insight into either the method of construction or a means of authentication must be attached to a Norseman.

It will be convenient to mention here an argument in favour of a German model for the prologue. Theodore Andersson finds only two Norse prologues that parallel the closing section of *Þiðreks saga*'s, in which those unsatisfied with the plot are dismissed as unworthy, for either resenting deeds more heroic than their own or being too foolish to believe without the evidence of their own eyes (p. 6, l. 24-p. 7, l. 12), and those two he regards as possibly having borrowed the sentiment from *Þiðreks saga*.[11] He quotes the beginning of the German *Herzog Ernst B* as a more significant parallel and places the motif in a German context, along with various other works. His argument rests chiefly on 'the vituperative tone' shared by German prologues and that of *Þiðreks saga*. Yet the saga merely calls naïve incredulity 'heimskligtt' and suggests that some of the potential audience dislike hearing of others outdoing them; hardly 'vituperative', in my estimation.

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[10]Curschmann, Michael, 'The Prologue of *Þiðreks saga*: Thirteenth-Century Reflections on Oral Traditional Literature', *SS*, 56 (1984), 140-51 (p. 146).
[11]'An Interpretation of *Þiðreks saga*', pp. 361-62.

His two parallels, *Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, seem positively mellow. As for what is said, as distinct from the tone (which, as is evident, is to an important extent a matter of perception), Sverrir Tómasson observes that 'Málflutning af þessu tagi má allvíða sjá í norrænum riddarabókmenntum og fornaldarsögum.'[12] 'Sjá t. d. formála Flóres sögu og sona hans, Bragða-Mágus sögu, Vilhjálms sögu sjóðs og eftirmála Hrólfs sögu Gautrekssonar.'[13] It is perhaps more likely that the topos arose in Germany and made its way to Scandinavia vîa *Þiðreks saga* than that it originated in Norse texts and was taken up on the continent, given that this very saga demonstrates the northward transmission whereas we lack evidence for the reverse process. The combination of the two forms of condemnation is indeed too striking to be easily explained as independent invention on the part of two authors, but one must also take into account the fact that *Þiðreks saga* has not a twofold but a threefold self-justification, appealing to piety alongside wisdom and perhaps as a mental link between that and ethics: on p. 4 the 'scholarly' appraisal of the deeds recounted begins with a mention of Genesis, and the prologue ends with the reminder that 'ei ma suo mikit fra seighia þessum lutum og ødrumm ath ei munde almattigur gud fæ gefit þeim þetta allt og annad halfu meira ef hann villde' (p. 7). Of course that does not disprove the link between *Þiðreks saga* and *Herzog Ernst B* -- such a sentiment could easily be added to an inherited idea -- but it deserves to be mentioned in any moderately full treatment of the subject, even if no conclusions can be drawn from it. This part of the discussion may be closed with the observation that Sverrir's work associates the mediæval Icelandic prologues firmly with the mainland scholarly traditions, and it appears that most of the formal features of the prologue to *Þiðreks saga* are typically Icelandic in sharing continental traits such as putting forward the work as a means of preserving edifying and entertaining stories from oblivion.[14]

I have already mentioned the scholarly attitude adopted in the prologue, and part of that involves consideration of the relationship between the stories as told in the saga and Scandinavian versions of the same legends. It is with no apparent sense of contradiction that the writer asserts the trustworthy witness of the poems immediately after saying 'þo ath nockut bregdist athkuædi

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[12]Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara á miðöldum* (Reykjavik: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), p. 247.
[13]Footnote, *loc.cit.*
[14]*Formálar*, pp. 136-40, 405-06, *et al.*

vmm manna heiti edur athburde þa er ei vndarligt suo margar søghur sem þesser hafa sagt enn þo rijs hun nær af einu efni' (p. 2). However, that may be explained by the fact that his discussion of the poems is concerned with the German sources and he makes no such claim for the validity of the Scandinavian verses, which were certainly made 'fyrer longu' but 'epter þessare søghu'. I do not mean to imply that the verses are supposed to postdate this prose account, but that the story came first and poems were newly made in the north, whereas in the south the accounts were immediately enshrined in verse, 'þegar epter tiþindum sem seiger j þessare søghu' (p. 2).

'Daner og Sviar' are singled out among the people 'j hveriu lannde þeirra er nefnd eru'. It is not clear whether they are distinguished from or meant by the term 'Norræner menn'. It might rather refer to Norwegians (cf. B's 'Nordmenn'), in which case further distinction may be being drawn between different traditions within Scandinavia, with perhaps even the suggestion that Norway has different ideas because it never appears in the saga. More interesting than this, however, is the list of stories that they 'hafa samann fært nockurn part søghunnar, enn sumt med kvedskap. þath er fyrst fra Sigurdi ath seigia Fabnisbana Volsunghum og Niflhungum og Welent smid og hans brodur Egli. fra Nidungi kongi' (p. 2). These are the only stories for which there are good Norse as well as German analogues, so it is hardly surprising that they are chosen here; but the ways in which they are cited are decidedly noteworthy. Before going into detail on that topic, it is well to point out that the Sigurð and Niflung sections are the only parts of the saga in which alteration towards the Scandinavian form is generally recognised, so seeing it keeping such company here leads to the thought that the other story, that of Velent, might be similarly adapted; and indeed examination of that tale lends tentative support to such a theory.

Sigurð Fafnisbani and the Niflungs are the name-forms used in the main text of the saga as well as in the indigenous Scandinavian tellings of their legends, but the Vǫlsungs are never mentioned in *Þiðreks saga* apart from this place in the prologue, so it would appear that the Scandinavian versions of this complex are meant; whereas Velent and Niðung are forms peculiar to this saga, in contrast to *Vǫlundarkviða*'s Vǫlund and Niðuð (Egil appears in this form in both texts, which might lead to suspicion were it not that the form is characteristic of both Norse and German), so it looks as if the reference is to the account contained in the prose. One might suggest that the prologue-writer in fact knew of Scandinavian tradition in which the smith is

indeed called Velent and not Vǫlund, but that is rendered less likely (although not impossible) by the points in the main text saying 'er væringiar kalla volond' (ch. 111, p. 105; ch. 302, p. 360) and asserting the use of that name-form 'vm alla norðrhalfo heimsins' for a great smith (ch. 111, pp. 105-06). The most probable explanation for the curious mixture of forms in the prologue is, in my opinion, that it is symptomatic of a general lack of regular system in the work. It is possible to argue that the prologue-writer (or later scribe, as these names are only found in MS A) in fact derived his information about Velent purely from this saga, whereas something like *Vǫlsunga saga* was also available to him and there he found the name 'Vǫlsungar'; but if he knew Velent only from here, his knowledge of Scandinavian tradition about him must come from the citations of the Scandinavian name-form, 'Vǫlund', which one would therefore expect him to use.

Having already noted that the Sigurð and Niflung legends are prominent among the stories shared by *Þiðreks saga* and indigenous Scandinavian tradition, it is instructive to observe that they are mentioned in the list of contents at the beginning of the prologue. That runs: 'sagt er fraa Þidreki kongi og hans køppum Sigurdi Fabnis bana og Niflunghum Villtina monnum og morghum audrum kóngum og køppumm' (p.1). It is not evident from this that the writer of the prologue had much idea of the make-up of the book. The most casual of readers could not fail to notice that it deals largely with Þiðrek and his champions; Sigurð and the Niflungar comprise the section most familiar to a Scandinavian audience; and the Vilkina men dominate the beginning of the saga, to such an extent that the whole work was formerly referred to as the 'Vilkina saga': so he has merely selected the most noteworthy element from each point of view. It does not appear, to me at least, that this section stems from the compiler of the saga as it stands; one would have expected greater insight into the structure of the work than mere acknowledgement of the first and central figures and an appeal to enthusiasts of the Vǫlsung stories. The question is further complicated by the fact that MS B omits the words 'hans køppum' and inserts after 'Villtina monnum' 'Russijmønnumm, Húnumm'. It is impossible to tell whether in the A version there was a deliberate alteration of the text in the direction of smoothness and acknowledgement of the three categories in which I have placed the three elements of the list, or whether a B scribe has ruffled through the pages, noticed references to Russians and Huns, and added those names here for the sake of completeness.

In short, while there are aspects of the prologue that would support the notion of a German original, a significant amount of it is characteristically Scandinavian. Some scholarly intelligence is clearly at work, and at least one contributor to the text has been familiar with the main body of the saga, but scribal interference has confused what might have been useful authorial or editorial insights into the book. One portion that we can confidently ascribe to a thoughtful redactor, the mention of stories current among the Norsemen, gives us no hint of any standard treatment of legends known from Scandinavian tradition, save by illustrating an unsystematic method of dealing with them that is also to be seen in the tales themselves.

If the prologue does not yield unqualified support to Andersson's use of it, the same is even more true of his other arguments. Their main fault is that he appears to confuse form and contents. No-one ever denied that the stories in *Þiðreks saga* were, as the prologue says, based on Saxon accounts. Analysis of the episodes, therefore, will add little new by showing that a German stratum, and probably a north German one at that, lies behind the saga as it now is. All Andersson's findings could quite easily be explained by positing translation from Low German texts rather than from a single Low German text, nor do the discussions of his authorities go beyond necessitating 'schriftliche Quelle'.[15] The question of a unitary source for *Þiðreks saga* must therefore be considered still open.

10.4: German loose collection

It is perhaps more significant that there is no manuscript collection organised around the history of Dietrich, as far as I am aware. One might point to the Dresdner Heldenbuch, but *Ortnit*, *Wolfdietrich*, *Der Rosengarten zu Worms* and *Laurin* hardly form a composite whole. The late date of the Heldenbücher is not a factor in dismissing them; there is no saying how far their archetypes may go back. Given the popularity of poems dealing with Dietrich's adventures, one might expect to find them frequently grouped together. That they are not leads one to suspect that

[15]Hempel, p. 151. He contends that there was a single source, but though his position is tenable it does not arise inevitably from his data. His most persuasive argument for a single written source is that the prevalence of learned references -- 'die Gelehrsamkeit eines deutschen Geistlichen' (p. 147) -- is hardly to be expected if a Norwegian has simply taken down the accounts of Hanseatic merchants, whereas 'Ihr Platz ist einzig in der zu postulierenden Kompilationsarbeit eines deutschen Geistlichen' (ib.). But are we to suppose that the learning of the Norwegian clergy differed so radically from that of their German counterparts?

they never were; but the repertoire of der Marner is evidence for circulation of such works in each other's company, and his list of songs could almost be a table of contents for the saga.[16] The only story not included in *Þiðreks saga* is that of 'künc Ruother' (XV, 14, l. 264), and the inclusion of 'der Wilzen diet' (268) is particularly noteworthy, as the only tale I know in which they figure prominently is the beginning of *Þiðreks saga.*

There is, then, always the chance that Dietrich poems may have circulated orally in biographically ordered groups without such a grouping being reflected in manuscript collections. Nevertheless it seems strange that scribes should avoid linked sets if the stories are linked orally. The same reasoning could be applied to Arthurian poems, of course, and one would be perfectly entitled to draw the conclusion that the transmitters of the texts were commonly more interested in the individual works than in the cycle as a whole. We do, nevertheless, have the French Vulgate cycle and, based on it in large part, Malory's *Morte Darthur.* These may be compared to *Þiðreks saga*, of which, be it noted, more mediæval copies survive than of Malory. The parallel is not close, but it is about as close as we can find, so further examination may be valuable.

The Vulgate cycle, according to its editor, 'originated in the north of France towards the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth'.[17] In examining how the earliest parts of the cycle were combined by the addition of a copulative romance based on a pre-existing legend related to their stories, he asks himself 'What was this account, the mutilated *torso* of which was clumsily adjusted to form the connecting link between Robert's *Merlin* and the *Lancelot*?' and replies 'It was a chronicle, a "Brut," a romantic history of the British kings', which we no longer possess.[18] It is easy to see how such a chronicle would encourage the development of all-embracing cycles as well as discrete episodic romances, especially as the *Brut*s expand so much on the reign of Arthur in comparison to the other kings in the sequence. However, no good parallel exists to explain the compilation of *Þiðreks saga* by linking episodes on the basis of a chronicle account; chroniclers mention Theodoric but not as a high point of glory which would

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[16]*Der Marner*, ed. by Philipp Strauch, Quellen und Forschungen der Germanischen Völker, 14 (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1876), p. 125.
[17]*The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, ed. by Oskar Sommer, 6 vols, (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1909-13), 1, p. vii.
[18]p. xxi.

naturally attract such treatment, detailing his marvellous biography and chivalric deeds. Without a Geoffrey we cannot thus account for the transition from his Chrétien to his Malory.

10.5: Planned compendium -- Scandinavian parallels

Even so, the only occasion on which we can to some extent observe the construction of a biographically organised heroic compendium makes it look as if such an inclusive work would be undertaken by the deliberate drawing together of disparate stories about a common figure. If we allow that to rule out the mere integration of a manuscript collection, then the question about *Þiðreks saga* resolves itself into whether that assemblage was achieved by a German or a Scandinavian. Remembering our Arthurian analogue, while it is probably not the case that the larger number of manuscripts for the saga means that it was more popular than Malory's work (Caxton must have printed more than two copies but most of them will simply have been worn out), the fact that the Vulgate cycle remains for us to read and the Soest compilation does not must surely cast some doubt on whether or not such a compilation ever existed. Still, although the Dietrich cycle seems to have suffered no discernible decline in popularity at the relevant period, the old poems may have become less sought-after as new works filtered up from the south, and only the Scandinavians, sheltered by language from the High German epics, retained sufficient interest in the stories preserved in *Þiðreks saga* to pass them on.

We have already glanced at the matter of Britain. The matter of France provides a fascinating and useful analogue to the present problem in *Karlamagnús saga.* It is generally ascribed to the same impulse as *Þiðreks saga, viz.* the desire for translations of continental romances at the court of Hákon Hákonarson, possibly inspired by Brother Robert's *Tristrams saga. Karlamagnús saga* is an assembly of tales almost as diverse and just as long and muddled as *Þiðreks saga.* There is no single French original for the whole work, although most of the component parts are derived from sources closely related to extant texts. Constance B. Hieatt, in the introductions to her translation, gives regrettably little manuscript information for the analogues, but of those that she does mention not one manuscript is listed for more than one text, so it is hardly to be supposed that this saga derives from a pre-existing collection of Charlemagne

legends.[19] In fact we have two distinct redactions of the saga, and in the later an extra story has been added (Part II, 'Af frú Olif ok Landres') which was collected by a Norwegian nobleman in Scotland in the late thirteenth century, so obviously at least one person responsible for shaping the saga felt free to pick tales from anywhere.

There is no way of telling which came first, *Þiðreks saga* or *Karlamagnús saga*. Either could have influenced the design of the other; they might indeed be products of the same author. If we could be sure of a foreign original for the form of one and only one of them, then it would seem a fair presumption, though necessarily not certain, that the other was modelled on it. The nearest analogue is perhaps the Vulgate cycle, which was forming by accretion at much the same time, but there is no evidence that it had any influence on Scandinavia. As it is, these two sagas might be a tribute to Norse originality.

Notice should also be taken of Icelandic texts, such as the writings attributed to Snorri Sturluson. His chief works, the *Edda* and *Heimskringla*, are in their own way reminiscent of the procedure of *Þiðreks saga* and *Karlamagnús saga*, in drawing together disparate stories around an organising principle. His centres of interest are very different from those of the two sagas under consideration, being respectively Icelandic poetic diction and the Norwegian royal dynasty, but they do demonstrate the practice of bringing a nation's connected legends within the compass of a single saga. Of course Snorri is not to be considered unique in this; he merely provides the most noted examples of such a procedure.

In short, while the absence of any persuasive German model for *Þiðreks saga* or a French one for *Karlamagnús saga* does not in itself prove anything, the presence of a group of Scandinavian texts with comparable methods lends weight to the idea that the structure of *Þiðreks saga* may be thanks to an indigenous Norse inspiration.

10.6: Integration

As has been pointed out in earlier chapters there are sporadic indications that the person responsible for the current shape of *Þiðreks saga* did not trouble to make sure that the component parts agreed with each other in every instance: in defiance of chronological probability, for

[19]*Karlamagnús saga: The Saga of Charlemagne and his Heroes*, trans. by Constance B. Hieatt, 3 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975-80).

example, Velent and Sigurð are apprentices together, and there are two contradictory accounts of the Niflungs' family relationships. Nevertheless the stories should be examined to see if at any other point they have been edited for the sake of harmony.

It is to be noted that nothing is said in the 'Þáttr af Valtara ok Hildigunni' of the lovers' subsequent lives. That prevents any potential clash with the record of Valtari's death at Viðga's hands, whereas the Latin *Waltharius* says that he 'Ter denis populum rexit feliciter annis' (l. 1450). However, there is no reason to suppose that the German original of the Norse narrative contained a corresponding statement, so the compatibility with later incidents may be purely accidental -- or, for that matter, an intentional feature of the Low German epic cycle. The Latin poet could very easily have introduced such a conventional happy ending without its being hallowed by any previous tradition.

The use of Heimir as a foil in whatever story he appears may be compared to the slight disjunction between the portrayal of Attila in different episodes: successful in war yet derided for cowardice, generous to one pair of eloping lovers and vengeful towards another, supposedly avaricious but resisting the temptation of the Niflungs' wealth. That is entirely consistent with an unintegrated assembly of disparate tales. One could argue for an unsuccessful attempt at integration or for an intention of characterising the figures as complex and contradictory. The former alternative does not materially affect the argument, as, whether or not an editor tried to reconcile the different sources, failing to do so leaves them distinct. The second option looks so unlikely, both because it would anachronistic and because there is no internal evidence that the sagaman might undertake such a presentation, that it may safely be dismissed.

In brief, then, it appears that the compilation of *Þiðreks saga* is a symptom of Scandinavian rather than continental literary tradition, but that no structural changes have been carried out within the component parts in order to make a coherent unitary work; the episodes have merely been welded together to produce a big collection, regardless of whether or not the details are consistent with each other. It is reasonable to suppose that the Norse elements already identified have been introduced at the same time and by the same hand, but that does not matter. What does matter is whether the rationalising scholar whose work may be detected was Scandinavian or German, and that cannot be verified either way. As we can be confident of Norse

editorialising but not, after all this research, of any comparable German input, it is more economical to suppose that both strata are attributable to the same person; yet it cannot be asserted safely.

Chapter 12: Conclusions

12.1: Introduction

It will be fitting now to draw together the general observations from separate chapters and see if they can be made into a cohesive whole. Even if they cannot, that itself will be a valuable finding.

12.2: Velent, Vaði, Viðga, Heimir

Most can be said about the first of these characters. The structure of Velent's biography resembles what can be gleaned from German sources more closely than *Vǫlundarkviða*, but there are elements of more apparently Anglo-Scandinavian than continental affinity. There is evidence (both *Vǫlundarkviða* and the Franks Casket) for a legend concerning Egil in England at least, but *Þiðreks saga* is the only such evidence for his occurrence in German narrative; therefore it is not safe to conclude that he is taken over from the German source. The adventitious nature of his introduction to the story without any preparation lends some support to the idea that, on the contrary, he was imported from another account where he had a better defined place.

Of Velent himself, the only aspect that there is any justification for arguing is not German is his origin. The *Anhang zum Heldenbuch* suggests that he is merely a human noble, whereas in the saga he is a giant's son. Yet no two sources agree on his genealogy, so it is impossible to show that it is probable that his father Vaði was not found in the German original. Although the name Vaði is found in Norse, there is no evidence to reconstruct a story or character associated with it except for that in *Þiðreks saga*. There is reason to believe that the Wade-figure throughout Germanic literature is associated with water, but nothing else can be deduced with any certainty. It is less safe to conclude that his biography, including his fathering of Velent, is a Scandinavian addition than that it is an authentic feature of Saxon tradition.

Velent's begetting of Viðga, however, has stronger support from various sources. It is entirely probable that *Deor* refers to Beadohild's pregnancy by Welund, although no English source explicitly calls Widia or Wudga their offspring. A similar allusion may be understood in *Vǫlundarkviða*, but again no Old Norse text other than *Þiðreks saga* mentions Viðga, let alone calling him Vǫlund's son. The later Danish ballads are very likely to have been influenced by

German tradition, but their preservation of the princess's name (Bodild, Buodell; cf. Beadohild, Bǫðvild) ties them in to *Deor* and *Vǫlundarkviða*, the only other sources to give it in a similar form. It is possible that the mother's name was also found thus in Germany, but there is no evidence for it; so it is likely that the Danes maintained links with older Scandinavian tradition, and that we may therefore use such records to confirm our interpretation of the older texts. Yet there is likewise no indication that Scandinavian versions affected the genealogical account in *Þiðreks saga*. The German epics too know Witege as Wielant's son, and the saga introduces no information that we have reason to believe was exclusive to the Norsemen.

An aspect of Viðga's heroic deeds, however, appears to be suppressed in *Þiðreks saga*. That is his treachery. The German poems frequently condemn him, but the saga does not. There is no way of knowing whether that is because the Scandinavians preferred to view him differently from the continental audience or whether the Saxon originals disagreed from the surviving High German works. *Widsith* shows that the figure's position was dubious, but does not suggest moral disapprobation. The reference to Widia in *Waldere* is neutral in tone. The actual non-German narratives concerning him -- the Faroese and Danish ballads -- contain no hint of evil in his character. Denmark often betrays influence from Germany in its story-telling, but the absence of condemnation may be due to either a straightforward survival of native tradition or a lack of contrary pressure from the Low Germans.

Viðga is conventionally partnered by Heimir. Heimir's presentation in relation to other characters seems to be affected by those characters' depiction, for which he seems to act as a foil. He does have stories of his own, but there is little evidence by which to judge their appearance in this saga. The resemblance between his *moniage* and that of Vilhjálm korneis together with the structural analogy between *Þiðreks saga* and *Karlamagnús saga* make it reasonable to consider the uses of Heimir as much editorial as traditional. The provenance of the editor or editors and his or their relationship to tradition are discussed elsewhere.

12.3: Valtari, Sigurð, the Niflungs

Mostly Valtari seems to be utilised as a general knight to fit in wherever he is needed, save for the one story inalienably associated with him. His elopement with Hildigunn has obvious

analogues in the other versions of the tale to survive, but it is impossible to establish a clear pattern of relationships. The two most closely connected accounts are unsatisfactory for the purposes of comparison, as only one is complete, and too much concentration on it has led scholars to consider it the standard version, reconstructing the incomplete one in its image. As there is no evidence of any other awareness of this character in Norse, it is probably fair to conclude that alteration in translation from the Saxon text is unlikely.

Tales of the Vǫlsungs and Niflungs are so diverse as to be frustrating for the opposite reason, their sheer multiplicity and unpredictability. This is especially noticeable in the earlier portions of Sigurð's life, where the saga's version appears to combine motifs found in Scandinavia and on the continent. Occasional inconsistencies in the account suggest that the mixture is a genuine combination of different sources rather than the original Saxon version. Glaring contrasts between the story's structure in *Þiðreks saga* and in other texts suggest that portions of the inherited legend may have been edited out, especially in Sigurð's wooing. Scholarly scepticism about the more flagrantly magical aspects may be responsible.

From the murder of Sigurð to the fall of the Niflungs a German original would appear to have been followed with reasonable fidelity. Most divergences between the account in *Þiðreks saga* and that in the *Nibelungenlied* are more plausibly attributable to changes by the High German poet rather than the Scandinavian sagaman. One exception is the very end, where the popular Norse version of Gunnar's death has probably been interpolated and further, less obvious, alterations made in subsequent events not so much to accord with Scandinavian tradition as to preserve the transmitted shape of the story as closely as possible.

12.4: Legend and history -- Attila, Erminrek and Þiðrek

The depiction of Attila in *Þiðreks saga* betrays signs of a mixture of views. There is, however, no reason to call one of those views Scandinavian. Influence from historical sources is the most persuasive explanation of the name-form, and the same sources could account adequately for the presentation of Attila's character. The level of historical information may not have been constant throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, but it was standardised enough to make it impossible to tell whether its effect on storytelling was more likely in Germany or in

Scandinavia. Either way, the probability of scholarly interference reduces the value of the saga as evidence for the nature of this figure in any tradition of heroic legend.

Erminrek could also be recognised as a historical personage. The fact that his place in legend is incompatible with factual chronology need be no hindrance. Continental chroniclers spend some time trying to reconcile the two. Still, there are no indications in the text that an editor has made such an attempt. Nor does it appear that any aspects of the Norse Jǫrmunrek have been introduced. The probable reason -- that there is no point of contact between Jǫrmunrek and Erminrîch -- has no bearing on the consequence: that we may safely consider the Erminrek of *Þiðreks saga* to represent fairly the Low German idea of the character and his deeds.

The question of Þiðrek is similar. The only firm evidence for Scandinavian awareness of him before *Þiðreks saga* is the form of his name. It is unlikely that the Norsemen had independent stories of him that could have been used in any alterations to the received text. Therefore we may judge that the saga records only Saxon tradition about the title hero with any admixture of historical or other details that may be found. No influence from historical records is evident. It is possible that the condemnation of his Arian heresy comes from scholarly sources; but it is also possible that ecclesiastical disapproval entered into popular consciousness. Such incidents as Þiðrek's breathing fire and his disappearance on a diabolical steed may point to a fusion of the two.

12.5: General

Þiðreks saga as an entity seems to be peculiarly Scandinavian in character. While it appears that, as we would expect, many of its component episodes circulated in each other's company, no trace of a German model for the whole work survives. That might be due to the absence of Low German texts in general, but when one considers how many sagas there are of a similar structure, including *Karlamagnús saga*, which is also without an extant original for its form yet the sources for most of its stories are still to be found, the supposition is strengthened that such a composite narrative is a Scandinavian innovation. Nonetheless, I am aware of no internal evidence that the process of combining tales has been allowed to affect the presentation

of any of them, save in the most elementary way, such as splitting up the portions of Sigurð's biography.

Mostly it is fair to say that *Piðreks saga af Bern* is a reasonably accurate record of Low German legend, with a few notable exceptions. Scandinavian analogues have been used where that is possible without doing violence to the continental version, and sometimes, as in the introduction to the Niflungs, two incompatible German accounts have been paired with no obvious attempt made to harmonise them. The chief repository of Norse interference appears to be the Sigurð sequence, but given the extraordinarily wide variation between tales of the hero's youth and the two-way traffic of ideas about these events between north and south, it is impossible to be sure that something which looks characteristically Scandinavian is not in fact Saxon. The type and extent of Scandinavian influence varies from legend to legend, so it is unsafe to generalise and extrapolate from the stories studied here to the remainder; but as those do not have close Scandinavian analogues, it is likely that they are unaffected by adaptation to fit in with Norse preconceptions.

That leaves editorial licence. I began my research based on the idea of a dichotomy between Scandinavian and continental tradition, however qualified. Since then it has become clear that we have to deal with another dichotomy as well, between two mindsets which may be characterised as the legendary and the scholarly. That terminology begs all sorts of questions, and I would not wish to defend it if pressed, but it is handy for the purpose of distinguishing between those who provided the material and the person (or persons) who shaped it into its current form. I am perfectly happy with the fact that legends and scholarship are not mutually exclusive. We have to deal with somebody sufficiently interested in legends to collect those of the Low German Dietrich cycle and learned enough to translate them into Norse. The prologue gives a rationalist justification for acceptance of the supernatural, yet it looks as if the more blatant instances have been edited out of the text. That might argue for two different hands at work, with two different attitudes to the composition, or it might display a common concern for the credibility of what is being presented. Whatever the motivation, this vitiates the value of certain portions as evidence for the north German forms of the legends without manifesting the Scandinavian equivalents.

However, sufficient indications generally remain for the original versions to be reconstructed plausibly with the assistance of comparative information.

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